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THE VILLAGE OF THE WEST.

VOL. I.

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THE VILLAGE OF THE WEST.

BY

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE VILLAGE OF THE WEST.

CHAPTER I.

COLLINGTON.

SO blue, they were like heaven—so still, they were like a dream which is not, like waking life, unrest. Range after range they lay, those hills of the fair west country, coloured faintlier as they went farther by the purple of evening. Their height was not great, nor were their flanks steep and scarped; they were in keeping rather than in contrast with the broad valley of the foreground, with its rich trees, and deep woods, and calm, broad river; while, rising

here and there in upright spires from the quiet village,

> ". . . . . a volume dun
> Of rolling smoke became a wreathèd splendour
> In the declining sun."

The sunset lingered about the landscape, and two young men lingered also, gazing, the one voluntarily, the other with less good will. They had knapsacks on their backs and walking-sticks in their hands; the last-mentioned switched his impatiently upon some grass that grew by the roadside, and said,

"We shall see the sun longer, Frank, if we put on a spurt to that brow, and get there before he goes down."

"I'm not going to put on a spurt," Frank returned—"I've walked seventeen miles."

"And I could walk seventeen more," the other returned, and he looked as if he had made no false boast. His was a capital

build for walking—better, perhaps, for that kind of exercise than for any which relies on sudden strength of muscle. For though tall and tolerably broad-shouldered, he was lightly framed, considering his height, his lower limbs being long and strong, though not unduly so; and he had that lengthy stride which, with the slight drag on it, whatever Captain Barclay and other pedestrians may say to the contrary, so often marks him who is described in tourist guide-books as "the hardy pedestrian."

If, after his seventeen miles, there was any sign of weariness in Bell Carteret, it was confined to his face. Not an ungenial face; there was kindness in the depths of his large grey eyes—not a hard face, any more than it was a plain or a plebeian one. But it was a discontented face. There was scorn and weariness on the close-set short upper lip especially. The cause might be

intellectual pride, for intellect was apparent in the forehead, which was deeper than the run of foreheads, and, moreover, not vainly so, for a phrenologist, looking at that head, would have told you that it was well-developed, and had not a waste inch anywhere; or disappointment might have induced the look on his pale, clear-cut features; or both causes might have combined. We know that there are some men who, perhaps by their fault, perhaps by their merit, do not take kindly to the world's ways. Perhaps Bell Carteret was one of them.

"Could you?" his companion asked just now, in answer to the last remark of Bell's —"up and down these ridges, I suppose? —not at all monotonous. We haven't met a human being for the last hour and a quarter. But that circumstance, I suppose, has added to your enjoyment."

"Why?—hasn't it to yours? You like scenery better than snobs, don't you?"

"I prefer, just now, rest to misanthropy. Is that the place where we are to stop for the night?" and Frank Irvine pointed with his walking-stick down into the valley, where the houses of a picturesquely-scattered village showed white betwixt the trees, and the smoke, trailing up above, contended with the light mist that was rising over the levels beneath them.

"Well," said Bell, "I'm hungry, and I won't take you on four miles further, though the moon will be up just now, and the walk golden and glorious."

"Will it?" the other asked, with some interest.

He was a slight young man, coeval with his companion, of middle stature; his features were remarkably fine and delicate, with a light, transparent complexion, rather

long light hair, and a strange, dreamy look that ever and anon came into his blue eyes. In fact, the two tourists had neither of them the appearance of vulgar clay.

"But I don't think I can walk any further to-night," Frank continued, regretfully.

"Never mind," said Bell, "it's some comfort to have been rid of one's fellow-creatures only for an hour."

"You will feel more amiable after dinner," Frank said, going down the hill with some alacrity. "You will want to join your fellow-creatures in their smoke-room. You encourage your misanthropy too much, Bell."

"As I have frequently told you, you are rich and I am poor," returned his friend. "I envy you your easy-going and yet æsthetic temperament. But your nest is at the top of the cliffs, and I lie below, an unhoused bivalve,—pitched into by the tide when it

comes in, and neglected when it goes out."

"I trust that white place with the porch is the inn," Frank Irvine said, as they came round a turn of the road, having dropped by this time to the level. It was the inn, and the two young men reached it speedily. It was of some size, and had a very quiet, even pretty appearance, with the clematis trailing over the porch, and some tall poplars rising motionless into the evening air. But apparently some revelry was proceeding within, the noise of which came outside into the quiet of the evening, and to the ears of Bell and Frank as they paused before the door. Unslinging their knapsacks, and glancing into the adjoining stable yard, Bell noticed many vehicles, chiefly of the phaeton and dog-cart sort, standing empty. No difficulty, however, was raised when the tourists entered, and asked for accommodation for

the night, and for dinner. That repast was provided immediately, from remnants, as Frank rather discontentedly observed.

"And you call me hard to please," Bell Carteret, who had not complained, said. "You are just as difficult when men use you badly, only they treat me in that way always, and you seldom. For my part, I have dined, and a poor beggar like me is thankful to get a dinner at all."

"This house is like a hive," said Frank as he sat in his arm-chair; "nothing but men going in and out for the last half-hour, half of them in white flannels. Waiter, has there been a cricket-match?"

"Collington against the Howling Ojibbeways, sir," said the waiter. "A beautiful day, a very good attendance, sixteen gentlemen's carriages in our yard, sir."

"There appears to be a good deal of noise in the room across the passage," Bell said.

"I infer that the Howling Ojibbeways are celebrating their triumph. Has the scalp of Collington been taken, waiter?"

"The 'Jibbeways won, sir. Young Mr. Villeroy, he scored one hundred runs, sir," said the waiter, sweeping up the cloth.

"Villeroy!" Carteret said. "I know the name."

"Villeroy!" This came in still more evident recognition from Frank Irvine. "It must be Villeroy of St. Peter Piper's—Baker Villeroy."

"Mr. Baker Villeroy's his full name," said the waiter, pausing at the door with a heavy tray. "He *is* at the colleges. Wines, gentlemen—you'll see the list by the mantelpiece; champagne, claret, still 'ock?"

"I don't know Villeroy as well as you do, Frank," Carteret said; "if I did, I should just ask the waiter to step into the room where the Ojibbeways are employed, no

doubt, with the calumet of peace; and taking a goodish sized bottle of claret, tell Villeroy two men are coming after it, to drink it with him."

"I told you you would be sociable after dinner."

"I have had enough of action and of motion I," Frank quoted. "I'd rather stay in the arm-chair. They are making a frightful row; and their costume is perhaps wampum and feathers, a revolting spectacle!"

"The waiter has departed swiftly to take the claret in before we countermand it," Bell observed. And presently that functionary returned to the two tourists, with Mr. Villeroy's compliments, and hopes that they would join the cricketers. They joined the cricketers. Villeroy received them with all the cordiality he could muster, which was not effusive; for their fellow-collegian was a man of many runs, perhaps, but of few

words. He took nearly as much trouble to frame a remark on the weather as Shakespeare may have taken to compose a sonnet. However, on this occasion he did his best, and even succeeded in inaudibly introducing his two friends to the leader of the beaten eleven—Captain Pigot.

Captain Pigot was a gentleman rather under than over middle age, of military and even of ferocious appearance. He was big, as were his moustache and whiskers. He was bearded like the pard. Terror as well as admiration seized the youthful inhabitants of Collington as he strode along their streets (he headed the riflemen of Collington), his sword scraping the pavement. By profession he was a gentleman-farmer. Introduced to this warrior, Bell Carteret fell into conversation with him, glancing every now and then curiously at Villeroy, who was talking to Frank, or rather being talked

to by Frank. Just now, their first ebullition of feeling after the removal of the cloth having subsided, and Bacchus not having had the time he requires to re-arouse it, the cricketers were rather stolid than festive. The Ojibbeways had ceased to howl in triumph; the men of Collington were smoking dull care away.

"Try one of these weeds, sir," Captain Pigot said to Bell. "You see, sir, your friend Villeroy is neither more nor less than the finest bat in these parts, by longer chalks than I'd like to have on the door behind us. The innings he played to-day, sir, was the finest I ever saw. You know his sister?"

"No," Bell said.

"You've not the pleasure. She's a pretty little thing. She was on the ground, sir, in a pink dress—no—by Jove, I shall forget my drill next—her colour was green, it matches well with some complexions, if they

can bear it, sir. You know his mother, sir?"

"Haven't the pleasure," Bell said.

"A lady," observed the Captain, dropping his voice, "who's unpopular in the neighbourhood; but, in my opinion, a delightful woman. When Baker came back to the tent after his innings, and the secretary of the Howling Ojibbeways presented him with a prize bat on behalf of the H. O. C. C.—the H. O. C. C., I think I have the initials correctly—that woman, sir, showed a mother's feelings. She was sitting in the phaeton—do you know the Villeroys' phaeton?—green picked out with white—two little blackamoors draw it."

"Negroes?" Bell asked.

"Ponies, sir. She was sitting in it, and she called, 'Baker, my noble Baker, come and kiss my hand.' We all heard her."

"Nobody laughed, I hope," Bell asked.

"Nobody, sir—nobody."

"Did Villeroy do it?" Bell asked.

"She held it out, sir, and he had to do it, though it was too theatrical an idea for his plain, straightforward character. Join me in a new bottle of claret, sir?"

"With pleasure," said Bell, who was rather pleased at the unsuspecting talk of this formidable-looking hero, Homeric, at least in his obstinate blindness to the ridiculous.

"I hope you scored well yourself," Bell said, filling his glass.

"Six-and-twenty, sir. I only had one innings."

And the loquacious captain now proceeded to relate the circumstances of his career at the wickets with such minuteness, that if he took as long to get his runs as he did to talk about them, they must have been slowly scored indeed. Slowly or

quickly, however, it might have been gathered from the Captain's narrative that in the obtaining of them he had combined the science of a Daft with the strength of a Thornton, and that the ball which ultimately bowled him was the most extraordinary of balls; nor would it have effected his overthrow but for the sun, which, emerging from a cloud at an inopportune moment, dazzled his eyes just as the ball pitched.

While Captain Pigot thus pleasantly discoursed, Frank found the burden of conversation with the champion of the Howling Ojibbeways more and more onerous. He could hardly now get so much as an answer to a remark. With some astonishment he perceived that his interlocutor, or rather his audience, was agitated in his mind. He trembled, his hand shook as he arranged the straw in his sherry-cobbler. Frank did

not know what to make of these symptoms in young Villeroy. The explanation, however, was simple. Young Villeroy was in an abject state of nervousness, caused by the knowledge that the awful moment was arriving when he would have to make a speech. And even now the glances of two dozen cricketers were converging on the unfortunate young man; and Captain Pigot, from the other end of the table, stopped talking to Bell, and looked hard and point-blank over his great moustache at the Ojibbeway chief. Presently Frank apprehended how matters stood.

"They are waiting for you to speak," he said.

"Yes. Do you bowl in matches?" Villeroy asked, actually originating a remark in his desperate desire to put off the dreaded moment.

"Mr. Baker Villeroy," slowly and loudly

proclaimed Captain Pigot from the other end of the table, "we are waiting for you to propose our healths."

At this sally, the two dozen or so of cricketers, who were easily amused, unanimously laughed. Hereupon Villeroy arose, affecting alacrity, and, consequently, upsetting a claret jug. But he was young Baker Villeroy, son and heir of Baker Villeroy, Esquire, J. P., of Villeroy Lodge, and the cricketers listened to him with deference, and were satisfied with such sparse flowers of rhetoric as he culled for them.

"Health — Captain Pigot — Collington cricketers," was all that could be heard; but glasses clinked and tables were rapped in generous assent to the theory that after-dinner speeches are always eloquent.

In reply, on behalf of the men of Collington, Captain Pigot was fluent, not to say prolix. Very loud was the applause

which hailed the end of his speech; after which, while somebody was proposing something, the Captain hitched his vice-presidential chair towards Bell again.

"Baker won't do for any line of business where there's speechifying," he remarked, with the confidence of a man who feels that he understands the subject he is criticising; "no fluency. But he's a fine young fellow. There are other gifts besides those of the gab. He's influential in the neighbourhood, too, or he wouldn't be Captain of the Howling Ojibbeways—a very select club."

"Does the neighbourhood stand on the order of its going?" Bell asked.

"It does, sir," returned Captain Pigot, emptying a decanter; "it stands on ceremony, if that's your meaning, a great deal too much—in the opinion at least of Bob Pigot. There are the Hawtreys, of the

Limes, to begin with. Mrs. Hawtrey was Sir Frederick Snooksley's daughter. Young Snooksley Hawtrey refused to join the Howling Ojibbeways. The Hawtreys look down on everybody. Then come the Villeroys and their set, who don't notice the Pagets of the Grange, because old Paget rents land from Lord Carfax. Old Paget's too sensible a man to make himself uncomfortable either by looking down on people or being looked down on. But his daughters were asked to the Vicar's, and came away at seven o'clock, sir, in a huff, because Mrs. Blucher Boots had been asked to meet them. A pretty little woman she is; but Blucher was in the wholesale grocery line in London. Yonder's Blucher, third from the other end of the table, on the right, in the velvet coat—good field, and a fair change bowler. And yet all these people go to church and meet each other there every Sunday.

Mrs. Hawtrey very nearly ceased to attend, though, when the Vicar gave the Villeroys the pew opposite hers in the chancel. If you're making any stay here, go and see the church—there's a very fine Norman arch, and a panelled ceiling that's worth looking at. It was put up by Baker's father, in memory of his brother-in-law, Arthur Vaughton; and it faces the Hawtreys' pew."

"I hope it does them good," Bell said. "Of all the contemptible little sins of mankind, this rural unfriendliness amongst people who're next door neighbours all their lives, and might be kindly and happy together——"

"I thoroughly agree with you," the Captain interrupted.

The dialogue between the Captain and Bell was, it may be observed, conducted on a principle exactly opposite to that of the one which Irvine so hardly sustained with Baker Villeroy.

"I thoroughly agree with you," broke in the Captain, intolerant of lengthy remarks which were not his own. "It's so bad for the girls about the place, too. There's no chance of a girl getting married here, except beyond the parish."

"I fancy I've heard that Baker Villeroy is engaged."

"A sort of half-and-half engagement," the Captain replied. "Thank you, Mr. Dollop; a capital song," and the Captain banged a decanter applausively on the table. "Nice voice, Dollop's—sings with taste when he doesn't forget the words. But as for Baker, I don't suppose he *could* offer to a girl." And the Captain smiled a smile of superiority, as conscious of his own power to make a fluent proposal of marriage. "He couldn't say bo to a goose."

"He might write it," Bell said, carelessly

twiddling the glass which he had made the means of applauding the melodious Dollop. "He might propose by letter."

"He would have to make his own running if he proposed to Clare Vaughton," the Captain said. "She's not easily attracted by gentlemen; not a flirt like her sister. But she's much too brusque."

"Pretty?" Bell asked carelessly, by way of saying something.

"H'm! nicish figure," said the Captain. "Large melancholy eyes. But Dollop's going to sing again—deserving young fellow—useful in the church choir; and, with practice, will be a good longstop."

"When is Miss—Miss Vaughton going to be married to Baker?" Bell asked, regardless of Dollop.

Bell Carteret was by no means a man whose bias was towards the fair sex; but, somehow, he felt a faint interest in this girl.

Perhaps something in the description had taken him.

"It's only on the *tapis*," the Captain said. "But I wish them every happiness, every happiness. She's twenty thousand pounds. You might have tried your hand yourself, sir; I conclude you are unmarried —but for the engagement—I daresay it's not positive."

"I wonder you don't try yours," Bell returned; "if you, like myself, are in the single state."

As much of Captain Pigot's complexion as was not concealed by his hirsute additions, went very obviously red.

"He looks as if he had tried it already," Bell thought.

"There's Mr. Villeroy, too," Captain Pigot went on quickly—"whom you might like to know. Scientific people find him instructive, and the public generally find him

amusing. He is always inventing something. But I have heard it remarked of him that, as an inventor, he is prolific rather than successful."

"Will you come to our room, and have some more claret?" Bell said. "The men seem going."

"Between you and me, and the Vicar of the parish—the Rev. Bullevant Jones—very fair preacher," replied Captain Pigot, "I think coffee would be quite as good for me just now as claret."

"By all means," said Bell; "come with me this way." And they repaired to the coffee-room, whither Frank Irvine had retired some time since, and had returned to his arm-chair.

The Captain was fluent for another half hour, and then the two tourists were again left to themselves.

"Baker Villeroy has asked us up to the

Lodge to lunch and dinner to-morrow," said Frank. "Will you go, or must we walk on?"

"I should like to go, and you would like too," Bell answered. "It will give you a rest."

CHAPTER II.

THE PERCOLATOR.

"LUCIANA MARY!"

There being no answer to this invocation, the maker thereof repeated it.

"Luciana Mary, you will take cold, my love, in the draught that penetrates the window frames. Come to the fire, darling. Sit on this stool at your mother's knee."

So spoke a middle-aged lady in the drawing-room of Villeroy Lodge. The firelight that flashed on her showed the remnants of what had been passable good looks, though not beauty; a high colour, reddish, shallow, foxy eyes—far the worst point in the face—a narrow, weak forehead, and full mouth,

though not disproportionate, and cheeks and chin somewhat long. This lady was that notoriety in the friendly and genial neighbourhood of Collington, Mrs. Villeroy. She wore a silver-grey poplin dress, with deep fringes, and I daresay thought well of herself for consenting to be clad in a costume which, as I am informed, betokens the middle-aged female.

"Shall I ring for Marmaduke to bring in candles, mamma?" Luciana Mary asked.

"No, dearest, I like the firelight. It reminds me of old times. Look how it flashes on the portrait of your grandfather! Does it not, papa?" This to her husband, Mr. Villeroy.

"I daresay it does, my dear, but as I am sitting just underneath I cannot see it."

The speaker was a little man of about fifty, thin and grey. The portrait above him was of a very different-looking person;

an old-fashioned gentleman of bucolic aspect, almost bursting from a yellow waistcoat, and giving a vague impression of much brandy and water, consumed during the progress of the previous half-century. A beaming, fat old gentleman. The father, however, of the thin and grey Mr. Villeroy.

"And it reminds one, too, of your brother William, Mr. Villeroy," continued his wife.

"Then if it does that," returned Mr. Villeroy, "the sooner we have candles the better. I am surprised you should allude to William, Sally."

The breast of the poplin heaved somewhat indignantly at this remark.

"Really, Mr. Villeroy, I prefer my second name of Luciana, as I have been trying to make you understand for many years. But you are so unromantic. Your poor brother William had the soul of a poet. And his legs," added Mrs. Villeroy, rocking herself

in her papier-mache rocking-chair—"his legs were so symmetrical. I have often noticed the shadow of them when we used to stand looking at the moon together—at a time when I cared nothing for your papa, Luciana Mary."

"I wonder you are proud of having liked him, after what occurred," Mr. Villeroy said. "And he never cared sixpence for you, Lucy. You would bother him. But let us change the subject. Where's Clare?"

"He liked me well enough," Mrs. Villeroy answered, putting forth her foot, and complacently regarding it. "Luciana Mary, darling, where is dearest Clare."

"Oh, I don't know; pottering about somewhere with the child," Luciana Mary said disdainfully.

"She is very kind to little Frederick. But I hope she is dressed," Mrs. Villeroy said. "It is getting time Baker's friends were

here, unless they are going to absent themselves from dinner, as they did from lunch."

"I shall get over it, if they are," Miss Villeroy remarked.

At this moment the door-bell rang.

"My dear," Mrs. Villeroy answered, with evident alarm, and very rapidly, "don't be perverse. I understand that one of them, Mr. Irvine, is a most respectable young man, with a very considerable amount of landed property in Swallowshire. Do be more thoughtful——here they are. Where are you going, Mr. Villeroy" (Mr. Villeroy was scurrying across the apartment). "I wish those horrid ginger-beer bottles would burst, every one of them!"

But Mr. Villeroy made good his escape from the room and across the hall, just before Bell Carteret and Frank Irvine were admitted at the hall door by Marmaduke,

a good-looking page, with many buttons, on which was seen in relief the crest of the Villeroys, a crown, enclosing three houses that represented a town with the motto—*Virtute non vi.*

Entering the drawing-room, Frank and Bell discovered the lady of the house, sitting in a pensive attitude, with her arm round her daughter's neck, the latter being prettily perched on a stool beneath her mother. This study of natural affection was put to confusion of course by their entrance. But Mrs. Villeroy's maternal hand lingered on her daughter's waist as she introduced her, as did Frank Irvine's eyes on her daughter's face.

It was a very pretty face—as piquant and pretty a bit of *bijouterie* as a man might wish to transfer to his own drawing-room. The eyes were so brown that they had, in spite of their shallowness, the pleading charm of a

dog's brown eyes. The mouth was small and tempting, and the nose small also, not firmly shaped, it must be confessed, but still not *retroussé*. The cheeks had a delicate peach-bloom'; and all this attractiveness was supported on a pretty enough little figure, and surmounted by an abundance of brown hair. There was not much expression in the face certainly, but it would have pleased one of the miniature painters of fifty years ago. This style of art would, I think, have favourably represented Luciana Mary Villeroy.

"Mr. Villeroy will be here presently," Mrs. Villeroy said. "At this moment he is pursuing his scientific researches in the laboratory. Marmaduke, bring candles."

Bell Carteret looked of course at Miss Villeroy, while Baker muttered, ungraciously, an introduction, and Miss Villeroy glanced at him from under her eyelids, but to no result. It was Bell's habit to regard young

ladies with profound indifference, and he made no exception in Luciana Mary's favour.

But though he fell short, Frank Irvine made up for him; and women are so quick in these matters, that though Frank's look of admiration was no broad Manchester stare, both Mrs. and Miss Villeroy perceived that a hit had been made.

"I will go and fetch Mr. Villeroy," said the former lady very sweetly. And she left the young lady and gentlemen together; but on leaving the drawing-room, sought not Mr. Villeroy's laboratory, but the butler's pantry, in which Marmaduke was busily engaged. A terror pervaded the youth when he heard the rustle of the poplin in the doorway.

"Blow me tight," he said to himself, "I've forgot candles! I'll bring 'em directly, mam," he said deprecatingly, and laying

down a plate-basket as Mrs. Villeroy entered. But that lady said,

"If it is the candles you mean, Marmaduke, you need not trouble to bring them into the drawing-room before dinner; we like the firelight so much better. Luciana Mary's face always looks better when the light strikes up from below," added to herself this exemplary mother. "And," she continued aloud, "you can put the green shade over the lamp in the dining-room. By the way, Marmaduke, Mr. Baker introduced us so quietly, that I did not catch which was which of these gentlemen?"

"The littlest on 'em," said Marmaduke, taking up the plate-basket again, "the littlest on em's name's Frank—him as looks as if he took things easy like. I heard them talking afore they went in."

"Marmaduke," returned Mrs. Villeroy, much pleased at this piece of information,

"I admire your powers of observation; and I have always praised your fidelity. The great thing that obstructs your promotion to be butler is, that your language has hardly the requisite polish sometimes. I want to ask you another question, Marmaduke. Has Miss Villeroy been in the pantry lately, to—to give orders?"

"No," Marmaduke replied, with moderate promptness.

Mrs. Villeroy looked quietly at him, and then left the room. On returning to the drawing-room, she found matters as satisfactorily arranged as possible. Mr. Villeroy had returned during her absence, and was talking to Bell Carteret. Frank Irvine was at the side of Luciana Mary; Baker, upon an ottoman, was saying nothing; Mr. Villeroy's remarks were the most audible, and they were to this effect—

"You see, sir, the great object I have

now before me is to enable the British householder to make his own effervescing beverages. I am convinced that if the invention I have just perfected were brought into general use, a revolution of a character somewhat similar to that contemplated by the reformers of Massachusetts would take place in our national habits. But I have found, sir, by bitter experience, that the public grasps my ideas very slowly."

"You ought to be very thankful if it does as much as that, sir," said Bell. "My own opinion of the public is that it is incapable of grasping an idea, whether quickly or slowly."

"It may be so," Mr. Villeroy said, mournfully; and taking up the poker of the drawing-room fireplace, an elegant iron, not intended for service, he was about to dig it into the fire, but the instrument was quietly withdrawn from his hand by a rather tall,

graceful girl, who had just entered and been introduced to Frank Irvine by Mrs. Villeroy, as "my niece, Miss Vaughton."

Mr. Villeroy resigned the poker unconsciously. Leaning forward, and laying the fore-finger of one hand on the successive digits of the other, as he advanced from point to point, he went on, with animation,

"Do you ask me, sir, how to remove the occasional intoxication of the upper classes, the prevalent drunkenness of the boozy million? I answer you in one word, in one monosyllable—that word, that monosyllable, is POP."

And Mr. Villeroy, with his forefinger on the last of the other hand by this time, paused and looked steadily at Bell Carteret. That young gentleman was relieved when Mrs. Villeroy, taking advantage of this interval, put in—

"May I introduce you to my niece, Miss Vaughton?"

Bell had hardly bowed, and formed a hasty opinion that the young lady opposite him had something about her that was not found in the general run of young ladies, when Mr. Villeroy recommenced, with his forefinger starting again upon his thumb—

"It is difficult, sir, to catch the ear of the House of Commons."

"Mr. Villeroy is thinking of standing for Alebury next election," said his wife, complacently; "and our lawyer there tells us his return is certain."

"But when I am once in the House," resumed the future M.P., "I think I shall be able to attract its attention. I shall rise two or three times a week, and the moment I catch the Speaker's eye I shall say 'pop,' as loud as I can, and then sit down again. When once I have established myself, by these means, on familiar terms with the House, I shall discuss the subject at large.

I think my little notion is calculated to make me known in the House of Commons."

"I think it is," Bell said, quite unable to suppress his laughter.

Mr. Villeroy was not offended. Perhaps he was used to these ebullitions upon similar occasions.

"Now, sir," he continued, "to carry out my idea, I have invented a mechanical contrivance, which I shall exhibit to you at dinner to-day. This will be the first experiment. At present there is no such machine in use anywhere. The gas which is required can, with the present appliances, only be had in the large quantities which, though desirable in a manufactory, cannot conveniently be stored in a private house. But I have brought almost to its last stage a machine, the working of which you will see to-day at dinner. By a simple process——"

"My dear," Mrs. Villeroy interrupted,

"Marmaduke is in the doorway. Mr. Carteret, I think you are older than your friend —at least you look more careworn." Bell offered his arm. "Mr. Irvine, will you take Luciana Mary? Baker, Clare is waiting for you."

"I shall have to wait for Baker some time," Clare remarked, "so I will go in by myself."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Villeroy. "Baker, take Clare in to dinner."

"Baker is asleep, aunt," said Clare, "and I daresay I can walk as far as the dining-room without him."

"Marmaduke!" Mrs. Villeroy called out, while the procession, now formed, was still delayed. "Marmaduke, wake Mr. Baker."

"I will wake him myself," Clare said, going towards the dormant cricketer, who, snoring loudly, proclaimed her assertion true.

"On no account," Mrs. Villeroy replied, stiffly. "Procure the attendance of Marmaduke. Oh! here he comes. Marmaduke, wake Mr. Baker."

Marmaduke having accomplished the somewhat delicate task imposed on him, and Baker having been made conscious of things in general, and his duty towards Clare in particular, they went in to dinner. Miss Clare Vaughton had, of course, on one side the delight of Baker Villeroy's conversation; on the other chanced to sit Bell Carteret.

It has been before observed that Bell was not given to observation of the fair sex, but, somehow, he found himself, several times that evening, looking with interest at Clare Vaughton. She was not a beautiful girl, but after determining, with some hesitation, so much against her, he settled it in his mind that Captain Pigot, on the previous

evening, had underrated her appearance. Perhaps, he thought, she had administered a repulse to that gallant officer. He wondered, being, as I have intimated, cynical in regard to young ladies, why she had refused him. And, indeed, the warrior Pigot had offered to Clare and been refused, and Bell was right in this conjecture. And yet Clare looked too young to have had much experience of lovers. She was taller as well as younger than her cousin, and might have played Dian to the latter's Venus. In her large eyes, to which Captain Pigot had not done injustice, there was tenderness and pensiveness, and she had all the timid grace of youth, and probably the drawbacks of that period of life, thought Bell Carteret, wondering at himself for taking an interest in a girl, and devising, as he sat by her, some remark suitable to her youth and inexperience. Should he descend to her

level, or, instead, startle her weak young mind with one of his paradoxes? Ultimately he did both these things.

"This is a beautiful county, Miss Vaughton," he began.

"Yes," she said.

Bell was a little disappointed. "It is always 'yes' and 'no' at this age," he thought.

"I like it," he resumed, "because it appears to me that none of the inhabitants have anything to do."

"Then you see things very superficially," Clare returned.

"I have always," Bell resumed, not feeling as yet that he had the best of it—"I have always had the same abhorrence of industry which moralists have of idleness."

"I understand the feeling," Clare returned, looking at him with her large eyes for the first time, and with some interest.

It was not a flirt's look. Clare's cousin Luciana had been known to complain that, while she herself could not look at a man without being straightway supposed to be making eyes at him, Clare might stare at the male sex with impunity. But, somehow, we have an instinct of motives, and no man ever felt challenged when Clare Vaughton looked at him.

"In passing through a manufacturing district, for instance," she resumed, "can anyone who likes to see places fair and people happy be inclined to join in the prevalent admiration of industry? If idleness is bad, industry seems worse."

Bell Carteret ceased to wonder that Miss Vaughton had refused Captain Pigot. He felt, also, that he had better use his paradoxes carefully, and his commonplaces not at all.

"Does your practice follow your theories?" he asked. "Are you idle?"

"Yes, and I am dreadfully moped. I would give my earnings to work for them."

"I don't clearly see the good of work," Bell said, giving a meditative half turn to his tumbler. "It doesn't discipline *my* character; it merely makes me ill-tempered. Why mayn't people be idle, if they would do no harm? If I were idle, I should be even more exemplary than I am."

"May I ask what your particular work is?" returned Clare. "Perhaps it doesn't suit you—perhaps you are a square man in a round hole."

"I am an under-master in a school," Bell informed her.

"Perhaps you will be head-master some day."

"If I behave well—that is, if I keep my opinions to myself, forget that I once had an intellect and was a gentleman, and generally play the hypocritical drudge in an un-

pretending way, I shall remain an undermaster. If not, I shall be turned off—be regarded as a disreputable character, and end life as an omnibus conductor, or as a sporting prophet."

"I see you are a cynic," said Clare.

"You compliment me," Bell replied. "May I give you some of this—this—I am not used to luxurious dishes—I forget its name. Cynicism *is* a virtue. It is inevitable. An honest man who thinks must be a cynic."

"Cynics are supposed to hate virtue and honesty," Clare said.

"It is a mistake—they hate hypocrisy."

"I fear I am a cynic," said Clare.

"I daresay you are. But what do *you* know—you who, as Tennyson says, have lain in the roses and fed on the lilies of life—what do you know of the hypocrisy which must be understood and practised," said

Bell bitterly, "by men who depend on themselves for a livelihood—the hypocrisy which is the great and the only secret of success in life?"

"I think I know something of it," Clare returned, with a smile. "But is universal hypocrisy your creed?"

"No. Frank Irvine is not a hypocrite."

"A cynic, I suppose?" said Clare, taking a good look at Frank across the table.

That young gentleman was so much engrossed with the drooping-eyed Luciana Mary, that Clare had a fine chance of using whatever skill she might possess in physiognomy.

"Neither one nor the other. He has no need to be a hypocrite, for he is rich, and, being rich, the world is so good to him that he can scarcely be a cynic."

"Carteret," Baker Villeroy put in at this moment—he had hitherto preferred eating

to conversation—"the governor is talking to you."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Villeroy," said Bell.

"I was merely calling your attention, sir," the master of the house said, "to the little contrivance I am now going to test. It is, no doubt, an objection to the universal use of effervescing beverages, that the corks of the bottles, on being drawn, have a tendency to describe a too extensive parabola, and unexpectedly to gouge the eye, or inflict anguish upon the nose. To obviate this, I have invented what I call the Anti-alarmist. Marmaduke, take it round."

A peculiar-looking vessel, something between a coffee-pot and a syringe, having been submitted by Marmaduke to everyone's inspection in turn, Mr. Villeroy resumed—

"By an application of the percolating

principle, combined with a slide, I am able, you see, drawing the slide thus, not only to produce the results of effervescence without tumult, but in the exact quantity I desire. Now, look, Mr. Irvine and Mr. Carteret."

Hereat, after some manipulation, the percolator exploded with a loud noise.

"Stay," said Mr. Villeroy, "I fear I have made a trifling mistake."

"Oh! papa, indeed you have!" exclaimed Luciana Mary. "Poor Marmaduke!"

"I must somehow have withdrawn the percolating, as well as the under slide," Mr. Villeroy said, musingly. "Marmaduke, I fear I have splashed your face."

"Take my napkin, Marmaduke," said Luciana Mary.

"No, dearest," Mrs. Villeroy said. "She has too much feeling, Mr. Irvine. Retire, Marmaduke, for the present."

Marmaduke, who had received upon his ill-starred countenance a perfect cataract of gingerbeer, and had maintained, as in duty bound, the impassiveness of a Red Indian, was glad enough to retire.

"I am not one of those, nor is Luciana Mary," said Mrs. Villeroy, addressing herself to Frank Irvine, "who look upon their servants as slaves. Marmaduke I especially favour; he is a noble fellow, Mr Irvine; poor but honest; young but sedulous; of the country in all that is simple and innocent; of the town in all that is rapid and refined, or, at least, eager for culture. Luciana Mary, give Mr. Irvine some account of Marmaduke's early career as a national schoolboy."

If Luciana Mary had repeated to Frank the multiplication-table a score of times, or had compiled her conversation out of Proverbial Philosophy and the Cookery Book,

Frank would perhaps just now have liked her remarks as well as those of a Sidney Smith or a Horace Walpole.

He was fast falling in love while he dined. It is quite an erroneous idea that the stomach is antipathetic to the heart. An elegantly appointed dinner-table is a very suitable field for the conquests of young ladies; and Frank, as he drank his sherry—for Mr. Villeroy's proclivities towards pop did not fortunately extend to the practical. and he gave as good wine as any man—Frank felt more and more drawn to the prettiness of Luciana Villeroy, a prettiness that was likely to please a fastidious man—and was decorated to suit the requirements of fastidiousness.

However, the dinner ended at last. It was a long one—all dinners were in which Baker Villeroy took part. He went to sleep again subsequently in the drawing-

room, and Mr. Villeroy buttenholed Bell, and was prolix upon scientific subjects, though silent as to the percolator. Luciana Mary sang, and Frank, of course, turned over the leaves, and readily fell in with a proposal of Mr. Villeroy's, to bring his friend up to lunch to-morrow, and join in an excursion to a neighbouring hill called the Sugarloaf.

CHAPTER III.

A "NAVVIE."

"I WAS talking to the waiter before you came down," Bell said to Frank on the following morning, as they were finishing breakfast, "about a cave which, it seems, is the lion of the surrounding country. Suppose we do it. Your ankle's better; and we shall just have time before we go up to the Villeroys to lunch."

"Is it accessible?" Frank asked, lighting a cigarette.

"Well, not very," Bell was forced to reply. "There is a very fine arched entrance, which is easily reached; but it narrows rapidly afterwards, and you get into a

punt and go along a sort of underground canal, with an umbrella to catch the droppings; after which you crawl a hundred yards on your stomach with a tallow candle."

"I think," said Frank, "that on the whole I prefer accepting Mrs. Villeroy's suggestion, that we should come up earlier and play croquet before lunch."

"Luciana Mary, as she is called, is not clever," Bell said, abruptly.

"And, therefore, not disagreeable," Frank replied, knocking the ash off his cigarette.

"I don't much fancy Mrs. Villeroy; and Baker would be expensive as a brother-in-law if he stayed with us often," said Bell.

"I could afford him," Frank returned. "Will you have a cigarette?"

"Not just now, thanks. Then you won't even so much as look at the cave? It lies hardly half a mile out of the way to the Lodge."

"It's past ten now," Frank said; "and if we go straight, we shan't be at the Lodge too early."

"Then I'll walk with you as far as the new railway cutting, where the turning is for the cave, do as much of it as I can in the punt, and be up at the Lodge in time for luncheon."

And presently they started. When they were clear of the long street, populous out of doors with children and chickens of Collington, and with its doorways occupied by staring though sedate householders, the two young men came almost at once upon the railway. It was cut some six yards deep there, right through a long wood, and over the new-made banks already trailed a veil of flowers—fox-gloves, blue-bells, and valerians, as well as fern and ground ivy; and on the one side, where the wood ended, was a group of tall, thin-stemmed firs, each

surmounted by a disk of densest foliage. These trees somewhat intercepted the distant view; but, nevertheless, there lay before the gaze, carried up the vista, a long vague landscape, happy and calm, enriched here with wood, and enlivened there with village, and severed by the blue serpentine trail of more than one river.

As they looked over those peaceful leagues, both Bell and Irvine felt the charm of distance, and of summer, and of peace, as their eyes passed on from spire to spire, from wood to wood, and from river to hill, blue in its gauzy film of heat on the horizon. From one of the nearest churches there came ever and again the chime of bells, ebbing and flowing dreamily over the length and breadth of the undulant champaign.

Frank Irvine would usually have lingered long on the upland where he stood. He had true poetic sympathies, but rather for

the sweet than the sublime. He loved right well the vague soft scenery of a wide, half-undulating region such as this. Far blue hills, and near verdurous leas, and rivers flowing quietly, not murmurous, till you came upon the edge of their freshets—bells, the music of which floated faint as the scent of flowers on a summer-tempered air, such gliding of hours over such sunny broad tracts where life was subdued from tumults, and removed from multitudes, but still existing—these were the prospects over which Frank Irvine most lingered—these, had he been a painter, would have been painted by him in preference to the scenery which "savage Rosa dashed." But for once he was comparatively neglectful of them. He looked at them hard, indeed, and took delight in them, but only for a few minutes. Then he made another vain attempt to coax Bell Carteret into accompanying him to the

Villeroys. Failing, however, he went on thither alone, walking fast, considering the accident that had happened to his ankle. Bell looked after him mournfully.

"It's a sad thing," he said to himself, "to see a man who has really something in him falling in love. She's a pretty toy. I wonder if she's anything better, or worse? Frank's a spoilt child, and perhaps he will have to cry for the toy, which would do him good. Not likely, though; she'll jump at him, of course."

Thus meditating, and looking at the view from the section of the cutting, Bell noticed in the distance a prominent hill of a conical form, which, it occurred to him, might be the Sugarloaf which he was about to visit. Looking down into the cutting, he saw a navvy, who was laying a sleeper, and going down a few yards, he asked him the name of the hill. But the navvy took no notice. On Bell asking again, "Can't awhile to

tell you," the navvy said, and adjusted a spirit-level.

"Ruder even than the run of navvies," Bell thought.

But not balked as yet—determined rather out of a spirit of opposition to carry his point—he made his way farther down the bank to the navvy's side.

"Would you be kind enough to tell me the name of that hill in the distance?"

The other looked up. He was of Bell's size and make—not a bad-looking fellow, wide between the eyes, over one of which was a patch, and having a large quantity of brown hair on the turn, and a long thick beard in the same condition of colour. He wore a brown wide-awake, a very old velveteen jacket, corduroys and bluchers. Resting his two hands on the heft of his pickaxe, and looking hard this time at Bell, he said—"Are you a stranger?"

"Yes, passing through," Bell answered, "on a walking tour."

"Ah! there's some outline about that hill," said the navvy, turning to look at it. "As a rule, the hills in this western part of the country are too much like whales' backs. Give me a peak! Now in Derbyshire the hills are small enough, but they are shapely. I like to look at 'peaky tops engrailed,' as Tennyson says—don't you?"

Bell Carteret was quicker than most men at recovering from these little social surprises which are apt to throw us off our balance; but he was so taken aback at being addressed in this way by a man whom he had regarded as a brute of a navvy, that he found no words.

"I don't like the Grongar Hill type—too tame," the man said, lifting his pick and laying it over his shoulder.

"'Draw the landscape soft and long,
Grongar Hill demands my song.'

You know Dyer's lines? But you seem rather flustered."

"I—I must compliment you on your resources of quotation," Bell returned, really hardly knowing what he said.

"Keep your compliments to yourself," his interlocutor replied, returning to his old roughness. And he brought the pick down, and swung it in what Bell was afraid might be a threatening manner. "To compliment me is to insult me. You mean that I'm a tatterdemalion, and have no right to quote from the poets. And I hate compliments. I've been knocked about in the world from China to Peru. So I suspect compliments."

Bell, as an admirer of cynicism, felt sympathetic with this strange being, and drawn towards him again. He would have stayed and talked, undeterred by the swinging pick, but the other said,

"Good morning. I must get to working, and you to walking. By the way, where's your knapsack."

"At the inn," Bell said. "Good morning."

And he climbed up the opposite side of the cutting. The man looked after him, and when he had extricated himself from the fern, and stood on the top, shouted—"Good morning," once more, and fell to his work again.

Getting on to the turnpike, Bell stood for some minutes in irresolution. But, at last, he decided that he had wasted so much time in conversation that he could not visit the cavern, and he struck off at once for the Lodge—where, presently arriving, he found the croquet which he had expected proceeding on the lawn. In a field beyond, divided from the lawn by hurdles, Baker Villeroy, despising, probably, the milder

pastime, was batting with a net behind him; the bowler being Marmaduke, and the fielders some farm lads who had enough to do to field.

Bell went up to the players on the lawn, and was received by Mrs. Villeroy with politeness, but without enthusiasm.

"We are only waiting for Captain Pigot," she said, "and then you shall have some lunch after your walk, Mr. Carteret. Baker, my dearest son," continued his mother, apostrophising the distant Ojibbeway, "you have just ruined my favourite bed of petunias. That horrid cricket-ball; how stupid of Marmaduke not to stop it!"

"Marmanuke cannot be in fifty places at once, mamma," Luciana Mary said.

"She ever defends the weak," mamma said, placing her arm round the little waist of her favourite child. "But I may say that Marmaduke is provoking, if I admit

that he is trusty, and, for his station, well informed. You have not been introduced to Captain Pigot, Mr. Carteret?"

"Your son introduced me the other night."

"Indeed," Mrs. Villeroy said, making slowly for the verandah. "To know Captain Pigot is to admire him. His conduct is patriotic. He has given up his—his guano for his country, and his agricultural pursuits for martial toil, at the head of the Collington Rifle corps. He reminds me of Stonewall Jackson."

"He never gave up anything, I am sure," Clare observed. "And the Rifle corps is an amusement to him. He likes to be seen in his uniform."

"For shame, Clare!" said Mrs. Villeroy, turning in an indignant attitude on the verandah step. "What sordid motives you impute! What would Dr. Johnson have

said to you? Attend the next meeting of the Rifle corps—which will, I suppose, take place in the field behind the Wheatear Hotel—and observe the active and nobly devoted behaviour of Captain Pigot at his drill."

"I have once observed him," Clare said. "It seemed to me that Captain Pigot did not know his drill. He was always in the wrong place at the wrong time, and he caused a great deal of confusion, and had to be pushed about by the sergeant while the inspection was going on. But here he comes, on his piebald horse, and not in his Rifle costume."

"Where is he?" Mrs. Villeroy asked. "I see no signs of him."

"He will be in the drive directly," Clare replied. "Don't you see a head bobbing up and down above the hedge on the high road? That is Captain Pigot, riding on

his piebald. Look, now we have the full length; he is trying to open the gate elegantly."

"And he has opened it, with the grace of a—what do you call it?—a Spaniard, you know," Mrs. Villeroy remarked, intently gazing down towards the gate.

"A hidalgo," Clare suggested.

"No, that is too ugly a word. But he is cantering up to us."

Marmaduke was on the alert, and threw open the second gate. The Captain, in the distance, took off his hat and waved it. At a slow canter, that showed off his seat, he then advanced.

"I have the word now," Mrs. Villeroy said, regarding the arriving officer not without admiration. "It is Caballero. He is the *beau-ideal* of a Caballero."

But, after all, the arrival of Captain Pigot opposite the hall door was not characterized

by grace so much as by swiftness. For while circumstances were otherwise all favourable, Baker Villeroy vaulted over the hurdles, bat in hand, just under the nose of the Captain's piebald. The animal started off, nearly upsetting Baker, and Captain Pigot arrived opposite the verandah at full speed, ejaculating, "Woa, then, steady, lass, woa, mare!" and pulling his curb bridle till he was as red in the face as the cricket-ball which Marmaduke had just pocketed.

However, the mare's outburst was brief, and though Captain Pigot wildly careered over the ill-fated bed of petunias, which had been before damaged by Baker, she was stopped after doing this mischief, and leaving many hoof-marks on the lawn, the Captain then dismounted. He was a good-natured fellow, and laughed at the *fiasco* he had made.

"Didn't I think I was doing it A 1.

Baker, you're a beast! It was your fault; wasn't it Baker's fault, Mrs. Villeroy?"

"My son is still young, still careless," Mrs. Villeroy said. "Ah! Captain, can you believe that I was once as young as Baker?"

"Yes, and younger," said the Captain, somewhat pointlessly, with his arm through the piebald's bridle, and preparing to lead her into the yard. And the Captain laughed, "Haw! haw! haw!" He laughed and spoke very loudly, of habit, and he was easily amused.

CHAPTER IV.

UP THE SUGARLOAF.

MRS. VILLEROY, wearing her bonnet, presided at the luncheon in high spirits. Frank Irvine was continuing to pay her daughter great attention, and Mrs. Villeroy had accomplished a manœuvre, not a difficult one, certainly, by which Frank sat by Luciana Mary to-day, as he had done yesterday. She had also accomplished another, which placed Bell Carteret at her side instead of Clare's. It has been before mentioned that Clare was an heiress, and it was Mrs. Villeroy's intention that she should marry Baker. Besides, she had ascertained that Mr. Bell Carteret had no position, and

an equal amount of property. She admitted to herself that he was a fine-looking young man, but then that only made him more dangerous. She had snubbed Mr. Villeroy that very morning for praising him. Regarding him as a listener rather than as a lover, Mr. Villeroy had taken a fancy to Bell, who, however he might inveigh against his species generally, was always considerate to individuals, and had borne with Mrs. Villeroy, who now smilingly addressed Bell.

"Your delay in coming up this morning, Mr. Carteret, will be properly punished. I must ask you to drive me. Mr. Irvine will drive the two girls in the basket. Darling Clare, it is a pity she is so ill-naturedly satirical! She behaved"—the latter part of this speech was *sotto voce*—"she behaved unfeelingly to Captain Pigot."

"How so?" Bell asked, thus invited to a confidential position.

"She jilted him. The effect has been to make him delicate, but interesting. But I fear, Mr. Carteret, I fear for Captain Pigot's health. His appetite, which was once healthy, has left him."

At this very moment the loud voice of the Captain at the other end of the table called out, "Mr. Irvine, I'll thank you for another helping of pigeon-pie."

Bell could not help laughing. But Mrs. Villeroy was equal to the occasion.

"Poor fellow," she said, "you see he cannot take butcher's meat, and he is *so* melancholy!"

Bell noted, however, that if Captain Pigot could not take butcher's meat, there were still many kinds of sustenance that he could take; and, in fact, when every one else except Baker Villeroy had risen, the Captain's long whiskers were still bent over a plate of maccaroni.

"You'll play with the Ojibbeways next week, Pigot?" Baker Villeroy said. "We've three matches on against that new lot—rather strong they are—the Tootling Flute-players."

"Ay, ay," the chief of Volunteers said jovially. And Baker wrote down his name in a note-book which he kept as a record of cricketing engagements. "Who are the Tootling Flute-players?"

"Adamson of the Cambridge eleven's one—does the Harrow drive better than any man in England; Snooksley Hawtrey is another," answered Villeroy; and added, ponderingly, "I rather think Smythe the curate at Hawkston is a Tootling Flute-player."

"I hope he is," the Captain remarked, helping himself to sherry; "a very nice fellow, and preaches a doosid good sermon. Have you heard him?"

"He bowls well with a break from the off," Baker said, stripping a cucumber; in which

operation he was interrupted by Marmaduke with information that the vehicles and the Captain's horse were ready, and that everybody was waiting. Hereupon Baker Villeroy quietly pocketed a few biscuits, in case he should be hungry on the road, and they went out. The ladies were already seated, Clare holding a geological hammer, which she was wont to take with her when she walked out, as she frequently did, with her uncle. Mr. Villeroy, by the way, had not been visible either at lunch or before; nor, Mrs. Villeroy said, could he be persuaded to leave the laboratory, where he was engrossed with an entirely new invention, to accompany them.

Captain Pigot had lunched well, and his ascent of the piebald was not achieved without the assistance of a leg up from Marmaduke. Mrs. Villeroy watched him with interest.

"Poor Captain Pigot," she said to Bell. "My ideas about him were but too true. Once he could vault into the saddle; but since Clare behaved so badly to him, his muscular power is gone. Clare is a sweet girl, Mr. Carteret, but she has no feelings."

Meanwhile, Baker and Marmaduke stuffed themselves into the back seat of Mrs. Villeroy's phaeton, where they were rather compact than comfortable. And now the procession started; Captain Pigot gaily careering on the piebald, by the side now of one phaeton and now of the other. They soon were passing the railway cutting, down into which Bell looked, but could not descry his friend of the pick-axe. Presently they were driving through the long village street, to the great delight of the somewhat *ennuyée* inhabitants, and out again into the open undulating country, with the hills, to which they were bound, fast losing their blue colour and seeming uniformity of surface.

Mrs. Villeroy was fluent in conversation as they drove along, and still entertained Bell with the praises of Captain Pigot, whom she persisted in regarding as a romantic character. Meantime that gallant officer was beginning to find himself in a position of some difficulty, owing to the conduct of the piebald. The piebald had already, as we have seen, shown itself restive, and after they had passed Collington, it became very troublesome indeed, kicking in the midst of its canters, stopping now and then to plunge, swerving, shying, and generally making itself disagreeable. Captain Pigot retired to the rear with it, and at length, as Mrs. Villeroy, frequently looking back for him, noted, he disappeared altogether by the time they were at a distance of a mile from Collington.

She was much alarmed, and proposed that Baker should go back and give the

Captain assistance. But Baker, who, wedged in with Marmaduke, had resigned himself to his situation, was drowsy after his heavy luncheon, and would not go.

"Then Marmaduke must go, though I do not like him to leave us," Mrs. Villeroy said. "Mr. Hawtrey might be driving by, Baker, and it would not do for us to be seen without a servant. Marmaduke, just go back round that first turn, and look if you can see anything of Captain Pigot, and make haste back again. I am *so* anxious; Captain Pigot is a favourite of mine, Mr. Carteret."

Marmaduke got out, and went back according to order, but returned with no intelligence of Captain Pigot.

"We had better drive on," Baker said, desiring that the previous steady motion of the vehicle should be continued. It had sent him to sleep.

"He's perhaps stopped to get the mare shod," he said.

"Well, if we must drive on, we must," Mrs. Villeroy said; and they drove slowly on for the next mile, while Mrs. Villeroy kept expressing agonies of apprehension touching Captain Pigot.

"I almost think," Bell said at last, as they were going up a short hill, the ponies walking—"I almost think I hear hoofs behind," and he looked back—"Yes," he said, "there he is, at the end of that long stretch of road."

Mrs. Villeroy turned quickly, and saw the piebald with a rider coming rapidly up.

"It is—it is Captain Pigot!" she exclaimed, as the horse and its rider drew rapidly upon them. "But what is he carrying?"

"It looks like a basket," Bell said.

"He is bringing flowers," Mrs. Villeroy remarked. "How kind, how thoughtful of him!"

"More likely more prog," Baker Villeroy remarked, with some interest. And he turned in the back seat, sleepily, to watch the Captain.

"No, it must be flowers," Mrs. Villeroy said. "Ah, Mr. Carteret, I cannot understand how my niece could refuse him. Had I been of a suitable age, I could have lived and died in this romantic region, desirous of no enjoyment but the society of Captain Pigot."

"Indeed," Bell said, still looking back with some curiosity. "It's a good-sized basket," he remarked; and herewith the Captain came close up to them, and reined in the piebald, who seemed less refractory than before.

"Oh, Captain Pigot," Mrs. Villeroy said, shaking her parasol at him, "I have been so anxious about you; you have quite spoilt the pleasure of my drive. Have you stopped to bring us some flowers?"

The Captain, in reply, turned the inside of the basket to Mrs. Villeroy's view, which he was enabled to do by a motion of the elbow as he carried it slung on his arm.

"Dear me! there's nothing whatever in it," said Mrs. Villeroy, disappointed. "What can induce you to carry an empty basket on horseback, Captain Pigot?"

"Well," said the honest Captain, pulling up the piebald at the side of the phaeton, while, taking off his hat, he mopped his forehead with a large handkerchief, "if you must know, I bought this mare a year ago from a butcher, and when she's restive, nothing keeps her quiet but making her think there's a butcher's boy on her back still. I expect she used to get well flogged for her tricks in her meat-carrying days. So I turned back just now to Collington, and got one of Blogner the butcher's baskets. It's large, but it's tolerably light;

and as long as I carry it she's quiet enough."

And giving the piebald a loose rein, Captain Pigot cantered on in front, leaning somewhat to the side on which his basket hung, in the approved manner of the profession.

After this explanation, Mrs. Villeroy, rather to Bell's relief, ceased to sing the praises of Captain Pigot; and driving on faster, Bell made up his leeway, and overtook presently the other phaeton. In spite, however, of Mrs. Villeroy's garrulity, and the unavoidably eccentric conduct of Captain Pigot, the excursion was a pleasant one. Even Bell liked it, though he was of too impatient a temperament to like driving generally, and though Baker Villeroy said so little behind and Mrs. Villeroy so much beside him. As for Frank Irvine, he was charitably inclined just now towards Luciana Mary, and excused a little too much lifting

and dropping of the eyelids as she sat beside him, although he noticed it, and was generally very fastidious in such matters. He was not ill-pleased either with the company of Clare; and he thought that the Sugarloaf changed from one blue slope to many green ones far too soon; and the sound of its streams and the sight of its ferns were not pleasant to him.

After the carriages and Captain Pigot's rebellious mare had been left at a small farmhouse at the foot of the hill, under the charge of Marmaduke, the party began to climb. Mrs. Villeroy, not unnaturally, being no longer young, accomplished nothing higher than the first ridge; and Luciana Mary, for some reason best known to herself, chose to stay with her mother. Captain Pigot, having ascended to the top several times before, shirked on this occasion, and was gallant. Lighting a large cigar, he

sat down by Mrs. Villeroy and her daughter. Baker Villeroy went up some way further, till, seeing a convenient recess, he subsided into it with a pipe and some golden pippins he had obtained at the farmhouse. Clare Vaughton's light tall figure was always with the foremost in hill-walking, and therefore now she made her way up the slopes, through the great fern tracts that belied their look, and gave an easy passage, evenly with Bell Carteret and Frank Irvine. The latter soon fell behind. His ankle began to make itself felt; and, in addition, he was not of the turn of mind which characterises the Alpine Club. So Clare and Bell Carteret were, before long, far above the rest.

"Shall I carry your geological hammer?" Bell asked, as they went up side by side.

"No, thank you; I may be seized with an impulse at any moment to stop and chip. I suppose by the terraces that this hill is of trap formation, is it not?"

"My geology is at most not stronger than yours," Bell replied. "But I suppose that a good deal of this west country strata is grauwacke. The peculiar terrace-like formation you mean is more clearly found in some of the Yorkshire wolds."

"Mr. Irvine seems to be lingering behind," Clare said, looking down, "and I do not see my cousin anywhere."

Frank, indeed, was dropping farther and farther into the rear, being perfectly content to be left to solitary meditation on the subject of Luciana Mary. It may seem strange that a man of some brain-power should deem a young lady of this stamp worthy of serious meditation. But how long is it ago since love began to be represented as a blind god, and has he at any time since lost the epithet? It may be very easy for us to be apathetic on the subject of Miss Villeroy. The cool dissection of a pretty girl's qualifi-

cations in black and white is a different thing from the encounter with the living lovely reality, and as I do not mean at all to represent Frank as an exceptional young man, but merely as a refined one, there is no need to make excuses for him.

However, Clare and Bell Carteret kept gaining on him. They had reached the gorse belts and the haunts of the plovers before he had finished wading through the lower region of the fern. And Clare, though she was not as quick at these matters as are some girls, simply from the fact that she had little of the consciousness of her age, her mind running generally on other matters,—Clare began to feel that it was desirable her cousin, or at least Frank, should come up with her. Perhaps she was beginning to feel an unusual shyness in Bell's presence.

"They are lagging dreadfully," she said again.

And she swerved a little from the upward path, which was growing very steep, and made for a projecting piece of rock, whence she thought there would be a view down the hill. Just here it was very steep indeed; and Clare, feeling somewhat nervous at her *tête-à-tête*, went up rather heedlessly.

"You are getting into an awkward place, Miss Vaughton," Bell said,—he was now walking several yards from her side. "You had better come more this way."

But this observation made Clare shyer still, and prevented her from taking the more suitable ground, to do which she must again come nearer to Bell Carteret. Consequently, in another step or two she found herself in a very awkward position.

She could not advance, and her descent was too steep for her to recede without real peril. So she stood irresolute, on a rock

projection. Bell Carteret came beneath her.

"You are 'crag-fast,'" he said, laughing. "It is an unpleasant predicament. I have been in it more than once, myself."

"I think if I jumped down upon that ledge," Clare said from above.

"You would slip off from it, unless you alighted with more precision than you can hope for," Bell returned, looking at the stone she proposed to come down upon. "But stop a moment, I will stand below. It is the only way."

Clare perceived that it was, and, moreover, that if her feet did not alight with mathematical precision, she must simply be saved by falling into his arms.

She flushed scarlet, and as Bell looked up, and saw standing there, with the innocent flush on her fair young face, and her Oread-like figure in act to spring, he vowed

within himself that the beauty he had hitherto denied her was hers.

"Now, Miss Vaughton," he said, and Clare sprang down with a strange feeling in her heart of trustfulness. But she had calculated her distance so accurately that she did not require his assistance, alighting with such exactitude on the granite ledge that she stood there firmly for a moment that a sculptor would have seized.

"I am afraid, somehow, we have lost them," Clare said, "or they us. My cousin Baker, except when he is at his cricket, is dreadfully lazy, especially after a meal."

"We are not far from the top now," Bell said; "we had better go straight up and wait for them."

And after a hundred yards or so of additional ascent, they reached the summit ridge, and both looked down silently for some time on the new prospect. Even in

Bell's weary heart there was something of a summer now; and summer had come with a burst of June, as it were, all at once on the fresh virginal spring of Clare's hitherto careless youth. So they looked down gladly on the empire stretching fair and far and wide beneath them, where the beautiful queen ruled who rises annually from the shadowy land, with her face flushed like the flower of the pomegranate she gathered there —still bringing violets to the lanes and daffodils to the meadows, still quitting them only with the lost gold of the wheatlands and the last red of the orchards.

"I wonder," Clare said at last, "that you and Mr. Irvine get on so well upon a walking tour. You must walk so much faster than he does."

"That is one of our many points of difference," Bell said. "We have only one point of similarity."

"What is that?" Clare asked.

"We have neither of us any living relations. Hence he is rich and I am poor."

"I resemble both of you somewhat in that respect," Clare observed.

"Do you remember your father?" Bell asked.

"No," she said; "there is a tablet to him in the church, that I often look at and think over. That is almost all the memorial of him I have."

"I have not as much as that," Bell said.

"Strange!" Clare remarked.

"My guardian was a Yorkshire vicar," Bell said. "Won't you sit on this boulder, Miss Vaughton? I daresay Frank at least will be up directly." She sat down. "Which fact may account," he resumed, "for the scrap of geological information I was able to parade just now. He became deranged and died, and I was left friendless at sixteen. Both my parents were dead,

and he had withheld from me intelligence about them, till his sudden insanity made it impossible for him to convey it."

"What caused him to become suddenly deranged?" Clare said.

"Solitude among the Yorkshire wolds, I should say. Many a country parson has gone mad in his loneliness. My guardian was always eccentric, and he lived a more secluded life even than he otherwise would have done, on account of his bees."

"His bees?"

"Yes, he kept an apiary. The garden was always full of bees flying about; and the few people who would have visited with my guardian were frightened off. A morning call is not such an ecstatic pleasure that one cares to make it at the risk of being stung."

"Were you yourself inconvenienced in that way?"

"No. My guardian and I always went about in veils."

"And may I ask, unless I am too inquisitive, did Mr. Irvine's friendship triumph over this test?"

"I did not know Frank then. We became friends at the university, to which I worked my way. He was rich and I was poor; but we have been, and I think we shall be, friends. But," Bell said, breaking off abruptly, "I am boring you with my confidences. I am very sorry. I assure you it is not my habit to inflict them on other people—quite the reverse. I do not know what urged me to tell you all these things, that cannot possibly interest you. But here comes Frank to your rescue."

Clare, however, was far from being uninterested in what Bell had told her, and pondered over it often afterwards. They are dangerous things these confidences.

CHAPTER V.

AN APPARITION.

"HOW tiresome Captain Pigot is!" said Mrs. Villeroy, impatiently, as she walked with Luciana Mary on a terrace of the Sugarloaf. The gallant Captain had dropped behind for a moment to light a fresh Manilla, and thus gave opportunity for this contradictory little statement. "Always following one about," continued Mrs. Villeroy, "so that one cannot say anything private. Luciana Mary, you ought to have gone up to the top with Mr. Irvine."

"It's such a long way, and so steep," Luciana Mary said.

Mrs. Villeroy looked round to see whether

Captain Pigot was within earshot. But that warrior did not just now exhibit the desire for Mrs. Villeroy's company which she had attributed to him. He was standing about twenty yards behind them, looking lazily down over his ignited Manilla at the wide country which stretched below.

"You know, Luciana Mary, as well as I do," said Mrs. Villeroy, impressively, "that you ought to have made the little sacrifice. Mr. Irvine is highly eligible."

Luciana Mary pouted.

"But I don't like him," she said.

"Don't like him!" ejaculated her mother, lowering her parasol in indignation. "Don't like him! Don't like him! You *must* like him! I insist on it!"

"No, I don't, and I won't!" repeated little Luciana, flashing up, and planting her pretty foot destructively on a lady fern. "He is too superior."

Mrs. Villeroy was in so great a passion that she actually omitted to point out how Frank's superiority, sympathetic with her own, had caused her to see in him a desirable son-in-law.

"You nasty horrid little thing!" she hissed, and in her rage actually hit her daughter across the arm with the parasol-handle.

Captain Pigot, coming up, observed the proceeding. He never mentioned it, not being given to report ill of his neighbour, but it modified, without his knowing it, his after-statements regarding Mrs. Villeroy. "A delightful woman, but excitable," was the estimate he from this time forth would deliver in society.

"Here's that horrid fellow!" Mrs. Villeroy said, red with rage.

"Captain Pigot," the perverse Luciana called out, flushed with anger on her part, but smiling on him through starting tears—"Captain Pigot, we want you."

"Captain Pigot," Mrs. Villeroy said, in the softest tones she could muster, "it is time the ponies were put to. Would you kindly find Baker? He is somewhere not far off smoking—that dreadful, dissolute habit!"

The intrepid Volunteer departed, not sorry; and having gained this little advantage over Luciana, her mother was the more able to control herself, and to use on the self-willed young lady the art which might further, rather than the violence which hindered her devices.

"Mr. Irvine admires you immensely, Luciana Mary."

"So do others," the girl returned saucily.

"He will be a member of Parliament, with his talents and position—perhaps a baronet before long. Such a take-down for Millicent and Honoria Hawtrey! Talent is not common among rich young men, and

Mr. Irvine must take a very high place eventually. And he is rather good-looking, Luciana."

"I don't like light men," Luciana said; "and his whiskers will never be as long as Captain Pigot's."

"Let one of the Hawtrey girls marry Captain Pigot," said Mrs. Villeroy. "But you will not throw this chance away, my darling," she went on imploringly. "I am sure you have too much sense. I am sorry I hit you with the parasol, Luciana. Let us kiss and be friends."

And mother and daughter kissed on the edge looking over the great gold-green country, so quiet and wide—so pure, and bountiful, and fair—a curious, strange kiss, with much of bad, and yet something of good in the feelings that caused the caress. And Luciana Mary, who privately, perhaps, was less unwilling than the spirit of opposi-

tion had made her seem, was in the end cajoled into obedience.

Captain Pigot's search had not been of long duration, when its object rejoined his mother and sister, and, shortly afterwards, the others who had climbed the hill reappeared descending. Both Bell and Frank, in spite of the latter's indolence, were practised hill-climbers; but though the slopes of the Sugarloaf were somewhat difficult, Clare Vaughton did not retard her companions, and displayed a very creditable skill in going down-hill, an operation which, metaphorically, may be easy enough, but is, in the literal sense, when the gradient is long and steep, a difficult thing for dignity to support.

It was just as well, perhaps, after all, that Luciana Mary did not go up to the top. So, at least, thought Mrs. Villeroy, looking up and seeing how gracefully, yet quickly,

Clare descended. For Luciana Mary, though the prettiness of her face was perfect, had not, except to the cursory gaze, a good figure; and though like the gazelle, perhaps, in Frank Irvine's present estimation, was not as fleet or as sure of foot as that elegant wild creature of the hills.

After some expectation, Captain Pigot reappeared, having found, instead of Baker, two ladies and a gentleman.

"It's the Hawtreys," said Luciana Mary, when the strangers were near enough to be recognised—"Millicent, and Honoria, and Snooksley Hawtrey."

Mrs. Villeroy became instantly the most dignified in attitude and serious of matrons. She walked slowly on, glad in her secret heart that she had two such personable young men in her train as Frank and Bell.

It might have been thought that country neighbours meeting each other on a hill-side

upon a summer afternoon, would have encountered pleasantly enough. But betwixt the Villeroys and the Hawtreys there arose the shade of a great uncle of the former, who had been a wholesale teadealer. Therefore, the two Miss Hawtreys only nodded stiffly when Captain Pigot left them at a distance of some twenty yards from the Villeroys, and went their way. Nor was the Howling Ojibbeway more than thus acknowledged by the Tootling Flute-player.

"What a woman that Mrs. Villeroy is!" said Millicent to her sister, when Captain Pigot had left them. "Always picking up somebody or other whom she considers adapted for Luciana Mary. They don't come off, though. There was that young Tomlinson, Captain in the Marines, and Butcher, nephew of the great London confectioner."

"It would be a rare thing for you

girls," observed Snooksley, "if our maternal relative looked out as well as Mrs. Villeroy. Either of those fellows with her now would have done for you. They're both gentlemen."

"You're no gentleman, Snooksley, to talk to us in this way," said Millicent.

"When girls, as they call themselves, are twenty-eight, it's time to be looking out, in my opinion," Snooksley continued. "Hold a little to the right, Milly, we must go through that stile. Why the doose couldn't you persuade the governor to put up the Tootling Flute-players for the night before the match? One of them might have taken a fancy to one of you."

"Our house is not an inn," Honoria said. "We haven't accommodation for eleven Tootling Fluteplayers. It would drive mamma wild with nervousness."

"I wouldn't have a Tootling Flute-player

if he asked me," said Millicent. "I wonder you can't invent a better name for your club. I am sure it will lower our position in the county."

"Well, at the first club meeting I objected to it," Snooksley remarked. "To the left, Honoria, there's a plank over the brook. But we have three funny men in the first eleven, and they carried it."

"It's a pity," said Honoria. "Who is that rather important-looking man, standing yonder by the gate, staring about him? Is he one of Mrs. Villeroy's speculations? I have never seen him before."

"I should say," observed Snooksley, regarding the person in question, "that he was here on his own account. That trap he has just got down from belongs to the Wheatear."

"And a shabby concern it is," Honoria said.

"Not shabbier than he looks, now we are getting closer," Snooksley remarked.

The gate at which the man of shabby but imposing appearance was standing, holding his horse, and looking irresolutely about him, lay in the path of the Hawtreys, and as Snooksley opened it the other addressed him, holding his horse with one hand, and with the other thumb inserted in the armlet of his waistcoat.

"Do you know, sir," he said, "whether a gentleman of the name of Irvine is visiting this very picturesque mountain this afternoon?"

"No," Snooksley said, "I know no such name."

"I thought he might belong to your party," the stranger said.

"Perhaps he is one of the two gentlemen we saw with the Villeroys," Millicent Hawtrey said. "Their party is not above a

quarter of a mile off, just above that farm-house. You would find them all together."

The stranger effusively thanked her; but at once got into his vehicle, and drove off away from the Sugarloaf.

"You should not seem to know so much about those Villeroys, Milly?" Honoria said.

While this conversation was going on, the Villeroy party gained the farm-house, and arranged themselves as before in regard to the two phaetons and one horse. Still Frank Irvine drove the two girls; still Captain Pigot, his long whiskers curling to the gentle breeze, and carrying the butcher's basket, bestrode his piebald; still Bell Carteret had the honour of taking care of Mrs. Villeroy, with Baker and Marmaduke packed in the hinder seat of the phaeton. Thus they returned as they came.

Bell had apparently some subject that engrossed his thoughts, for he drove in silence. And Mrs. Villeroy was much more reticent on her part than usual. She no longer discoursed of Captain Pigot. She felt even peevish at seeing him constantly cantering before them, with the butcher's basket dependent from one arm, and himself inclining somewhat to its side, after the normal fashion of butchers. Besides, Mrs. Villeroy meditated just now, to her considerable satisfaction, on the pointed attentions Frank Irvine paid to Luciana Mary. So Bell liked the drive home still better than the drive to the Sugarloaf. And yet, before they were three parts of the way back, he said—

"I fear I must leave you here, Mrs. Villeroy."

"Why?" she asked, somewhat astonished. "I thought you were coming back with us to supper!"

"Thank you, but I have some letters to write. I can make a short cut to the village by that turning, I think. The guide-post says, 'To Collington.' Villeroy, will you take the reins?"

"Certainly, if you wish it," Baker said, relieved to find that there was a prospect of his uncomfortable contiguity with Marmaduke in the back seat being ended.

So the phaeton stopped, and, while Baker was transferring himself to the driver's seat, the occupants of the other vehicle saw, to their surprise, Bell passing them. He took off his hat to the girls, and giving Frank good night, was soon striding away on the cross-road that led, white in the rising moonlight, to Collington.

Clare looked after him longest, vexed, she hardly knew why. "How foolish and childish I am!" she thought. "What does

it matter? The evening will be duller without him, that is all. I wonder if there are many men like him when one gets out into the world? If there are I should like to go into the world. He is not all whiskers like Captain Pigot, nor a mute like Baker, nor a chatterbox like Captain Pigot again. The evening will be very dull, unless Mr. Irvine comes to the point in the drawing-room before everybody, which would enliven things. If not, the only hope remaining is that we shall be sprinkled with the percolator."

Thus ruminated Miss Vaughton, leaning back in the phaeton with that sense of having nothing to look forward to which some of us weak creatures find so insupportable.

The reader may have gathered by this time that Baker Villeroy was not, in conversation, superior to Sydney Smith. Still, the Captain of the Howling Ojibbeways

might have been reported wise, according to Shakespeare, for saying nothing. But, somehow, he did not enjoy this reputation. Even his mother's imaginative powers could not make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, or of the similar member of an equally despised animal, and so she failed to satisfy herself that Baker was a genius. Her only consolation was to state frequently and publicly that he had declined to be a member of the All England Eleven, which association of cricketers was, according to Mrs. Villeroy, miserable at not securing his services. On succeeding, then, to the position quitted by Carteret, Baker remained silent; nor did Mrs. Villeroy interrupt his meditations, which were sometimes upon the matches of the coming week, and sometimes on the prospects of the approaching supper.

Marmaduke did not of course interrupt the silence from the back seat, and the

silence, as the phaeton-ponies traversed reach after reach of the quiet road, here and there skirted by poplars, was long. At last it was broken suddenly when the drive-gate of Villeroy Lodge was at hand.

"Baker!" Mrs. Villeroy exclaimed, and she clutched his left arm—"Baker, look there!"

Baker looked in a direction to which his mother's hand—the one which was not holding him—pointed. But the sycamores and chestnut-trees that were crowded before the gate of the avenue threw a heavy shade, and, therefore, perhaps, he saw nothing.

"What is the matter, mother?" he said, turning to look at her, and pulling up the ponies short.

Mrs. Villeroy was trembling more than did any leaf of the trees about her in the light night wind; and only the dim light

prevented her face's sudden whiteness from being alarmingly visible. Even Baker understood that his mother's feelings were for once fact, and not fiction.

"Oh! where is he? Didn't you see him, Baker? He has slipped away somehow."

"Where is who?" asked Baker. "Marmaduke, get out and open the gate."

"Your Uncle William—I saw him a minute ago."

"But he's been dead these many years," Baker said.

Mrs. Villeroy burst into wild sobs and tears.

"I know—I know. That's why I'm so frightened, Baker. I saw him a minute ago under the sycamores."

"I saw summut move away under the palings, sir," Marmaduke said, as he kept up by the carriage after it had passed through

the gate. "If it was a man, he went on all-fours."

To this, Baker, in accordance with his usual custom, replied nothing, but drove the carriage quickly up the drive. Mrs. Villeroy was seriously agitated, and the sooner she was got out of the carriage the better. As they drew up by the hall door steps, Mr. Villeroy came out to meet them.

"Half-past eight," he said, looking at his watch under the hall lamp. "Do you make it half-past eight, Baker?"

"Yes," said his son, referring to his own watch. "Mother's had a fright."

"No wonder, if she stays out so late. What's the matter, Sally?"

Mrs. Villeroy, who had by this time been extricated, in company with wrappers and boas, from the phaeton, by the exertions chiefly of Marmaduke, responded hysterically,

"I used to like your brother William's

legs better than yours. Yours are too thick, Mr. Villeroy."

"Marmaduke," Mr. Villeroy said, "go and see after the other carriage—it's coming up the drive. Mary," to another servant, "get the supper in. Now, Sally, you shouldn't allude to my brother William before the servants. It's bad enough to have had a brother who committed forgery, without being told one is his inferior. Hallo! Clare."

"I got out to open the gate," said Clare, as she came up the steps; "and those two took their time in the drive, so I am here first. What's this about Uncle William?"

"Your aunt thinks more of him than of me, because he made a little mistake in writing people's names," Mr. Villeroy said, clearly nettled.

"He had genius, and that excuses everything," Mrs. Villeroy returned, in agitated

tones. "You have thick legs, but not genius, Mr. Villeroy."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Clare, taking off her hat in the hall; "men of genius ought to be moral, like other men."

Just now the out-spoken young lady saw for the first time her aunt's pale face. Her whole tone changed. You would not have thought it could have grown so gentle so soon.

She rushed upstairs, and returned with *sal volatile* and other restoratives, while the wheels of the vehicle she had left were giving a final crunch to the gravel outside.

"Oh, Clare," Mrs. Villeroy said, mollified by her niece's kindness—"Clare, dear, I've seen something."

"Pish, pish!" Mr. Villeroy said, stamping up and down the hall. The allusion to his legs, a subject upon which he was secretly uneasy, made before the servants, rankled

still, and caused him to be slow to perceive the real agitation from which his wife was suffering.

"My dear," he said, in a somewhat more considerate tone, "you know you are imaginative."

"This is not imagination," said Clare.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NAVVIE'S HINT.

IT is a curious fact that, if a novelist wishes to be interesting, he must describe love affairs,—curious, I say, for love affairs in real life are admitted to be the most uninteresting things in the world. And yet, in catching the genius of ordinary life (which, I take it, is the novelist's real function rather than a sensational or ethical one) the authors of prose fiction are obliged to paint in wrong proportions. They must project their lovers in front of their picture, and make that the dominant and principal passion which, after all, is but one amongst many, and, in this prudent and plutocratic

century, plays a more subordinate part than it did in the classic or the chivalric times. Marrying and giving in marriage must be the *pièce de resistance* of the novelist, or he will find no readers. Perhaps it is because the world knows that it makes too little of love in fact, that it makes too much of it in fiction.

Thus, then, I am unable to make as much as I might wish of the scientific researches of Mr. Villeroy, or of the cricketing exploits of his son Baker, or of the studies of the art of war which engrossed the mind of Captain Pigot. To speak more seriously—instead, for instance, of laying bare the workings of the intellects of Clare Vaughton and Bell Carteret, who, the one considering she was a woman, and the other considering he was a man, had each of them brains, I am compelled to introduce them chiefly in relation to each

other, and to seize those thoughts of each which, though the most interesting to themselves, might be reasonably supposed, from an observation of actual life, to be the least so to other people.

Bell Carteret's late arrival, then, and early departure, on this occasion, did not cause Clare any wonder. She supposed it was, as he led her to suppose, letters to write; any trifling matter which required his attention. Had she wondered at his conduct, she would, of course, have done so on the supposition that she had attracted him; and the cause for wonder would have lain in the certainty that there was some mystery in his shyness—something more strong as a counter-attraction than the cogency of letter-writing. And the conclusion would have been easy in her mind, from the thought that he was falling in love with her. But in these matters there was a very wide in-

terval indeed between Clare and her cousin. Luciana Mary's mind, or what was called by courtesy her mind, had concentrated itself upon love from her early girlhood. She had read nothing but novels, and she had got the bad out of novels instead of the good. This natural and acquired inflammability might have been dangerous, but for two reasons. The first was that the deepest emotion even, of Luciana Mary, was a shallow one. Individuals are photographs of one original human nature; and when Luciana Mary was taken, the light I suppose, if not dull, was faint. Like many others, Luciana Mary was but a weak daguerreotype.

The second cause of safety to Luciana Mary was that, under her mother's instruction she had learnt the art, invaluable in this world, of making a business of the thing in which she felt most interest, and so of

being, in love-matters, a girl of business. There is nothing singular in this. Now-a-days literature is a business. We laugh at Burns for rejecting money for his songs (and I seriously think he was wrong, for was he not an indigent gauger and a family man?)—literature, I say, is a business—and why not love? Perhaps neither Luciana Mary, when she was learning, nor her mother when she was teaching, acted otherwise than unconsciously. Few of us are wise or brilliant enough to carve out our way by our own cleverness; we most of us rely on traditions, and so get along. When a man refuses pence to a beggar, because to give would be contrary to the principles of political economy, it does not follow that he is a scientific economist. To take a religious metaphor, he accepts the teaching of the Church, without troubling himself about his own private judgment. And much on the same

principle Luciana Mary, though, as we have seen, not perhaps quite perfect in her lesson, made play with her eyelids, and caused her mother to cease to lament that her excellent education had been thrown away on her. But then, we know, to play safely with edged tools requires great coolness and unusual skill. We shall see hereafter whether Luciana Mary always danced with safety among the swords.

To resume: after he left his friends, Bell Carteret, meditating on the same subject as the one a moment ago discussed in these pages—meditating, that is to say, on Clare Vaughton, fell into such profound thought, even upon so trifling a subject as a young lady, that he lost his way. He turned up a wrong lane and walked a mile and a half along it before he found out, by the appearance of the country, indistinctly seen in the moonlight, that he was walking away from

Collington instead of going towards it. Of course he had to retrace his steps, and, even when he got back into the old road, his progress was of the slowest. He leaned over gates, trying, in the doubtful light, to discover landmarks; he stopped at turnings, making desperate and futile efforts to decipher the names on battered finger-posts. At last he came to a standstill by a cottage, at the door of which he knocked.

He heard a heavy but decided step, not the slouching one of a farm-labourer, on the other side of the door, which was then opened, and he stood face to face with the man whom he had seen that morning working on the railway. Seeing Bell's face by means of a lantern he held up to it, the occupant of the cottage drew back, and his countenance, a free and open one, was crossed by a perturbed expression.

"You're not much of a walker," he said.

"Half a mile a day won't take you through the west country in a life-time. What *have* you been doing?"

Bell briefly explained that he had spent the day on the Sugarloaf, and had lost his way returning.

"You're going on to-morrow?" the man asked. He was dressed in his morning clothes of frayed shabby velveteen and corduroy, and his manner was, as it had been in the morning, that of equal to equal.

"Yes. Can you tell me the way to Collington?"

"Yes—but the night is young."

Bell looked at a clock ticking loudly above the fireplace, and saw that the time was half-past eight, exactly that at which Mrs. Villeroy's terror was excited by the apparition she supposed she saw of her deceased brother-in-law.

"Sit an hour with me," the man said; "I'm lonely. It's a poor place; but I've got some of Kinahan's best Irish, and I'll give you a weed of weeds."

He seized Bell by the shoulders, and thrust him down into the only chair, one with arms, as he said this. Then, after poking the fire, and bringing out a trestle stool from the background for himself, he rummaged in a cupboard, and soon had provided Carteret with all he had promised. Then, sitting down on the stool, and leaning forward with his elbows on his knees, he began to talk, with intervals of vigorous smoking.

"It's a fine hill that Sugarloaf," he said. "What do you say to starting for it now, back again? We could take the whiskey and bivouac. Just the sort of thing a young fellow ought to like on a summer night."

Bell politely declined this proposition.

"Are you fond of walking?" he asked.

"I've tramped a good deal—in fact, I am a tramp by choice," the man said. "I've seen that great Dovrefeld, packed with peaks, in Norway, and climbed the hill which the sun in the summer time only leaves for five minutes or so, at Hammerfest; I've crossed the Peruvian plateaux of the Andes; I've seen the Matterhorn, of course, and seen it out-Matterhorn'd in the Caucasus; I've heard the wind wild of a dark night, over the Sierra, where the Escurial looms; I've seen a good deal more of Skye than Turner ever did, though he painted Loch Coruisk, as he called it—such a lie never was on canvas. I've climbed the hills St. Pierre climbed—the hills of Auvergne; I've watched the eagles on Parnassus fly, as Byron puts it; I've tried to stand on the Pillar Stone in Ennerdale, and failed, as Professor Tyndal did; I've climbed

to the higher peak of the Trifaen from the Capel Curig side; I've seen the Himalayas, and I've gone up an Irish mountain, with a tail of bothering beggaring gossoons. On the whole, I've tumbled up and down a hill or two, in an unpretending way—Parnassus included."

"Well, it's pleasant work," said Bell. "Have you been long here?" he asked. "Do you know any of the people?"

"I know something about them," the man said. "You, of course, know nothing?"

"I went with some of them to the Sugar-loaf to-day," said Bell—"the Villeroys."

"The Villeroys!" the man exclaimed, interrupting him.

"Do you know the Villeroys?"

He could not prevent the indifference with which he put this question from being evidently an affectation.

Bell told him, in reply, what he knew of

them. It was not a great confidence.

"Did you—did you mention me at all to them? What you saw of me this morning would have made a good bit of small talk," the navigator said, helping himself out of his embarrassment of manner by using the rough black poker liberally on the fire.

Now, so great had been Mrs. Villeroy's volubility in the phaeton, and so interesting Clare's remarks on the hill, that Bell had not had occasion to supply any hiatus; otherwise he would most likely have given some account of his meeting in the morning with this singular person.

"No, I didn't," Bell said.

"Then don't," said the man, apparently much relieved. "Fill up again."

Bell filled up again, in moderation, and, thinking it judicious to change the subject, changed it.

"You like the hills," he said.

"Better than the valleys," the other replied, filling up again on his part, and *not* particularly with moderation. "There are fewer men in them. Men delight me not, nor women neither. I particularly object to my species. I prefer to them the loathed toad, the dreaded earwig. For toads and earwigs are not humbugs."

"I think you go a little too far," said the younger cynic. "After all, man cannot help his nature, and it's uphill work to make a good fellow of himself. Average decent respectable people who go to church are fair game apparently for the satirical. Doesn't almost every author sneer at them; and yet, according to my ideas, it's a hard matter even to be so much as decent and respectable, and to go to church regularly."

"I did not take you for an optimist," the navvie said, fidgeting with the poker, as if he had a spite against optimists.

"I'm not an optimist," Bell said—"rather the reverse. I see in the world nothing that is generous or noble, nothing that is clear or far-sighted. If there is a flash of these things now and then in very young people, it never reappears when they have passed youth. People's virtues, to my mind, are more contemptible than their vices. Still respectability is a virtue, and I try to form my opinions rather than to make epigrams. I think I want to be just, and perhaps, also, I have a turn for contradiction," Bell added candidly.

"You are a young fool," the other said, hitching the trestle a little farther back from the fire.

"Indeed," Bell said, taking some offence, "I have not the honour to agree with you. But, perhaps, your temper is not improved by sitting so long without a back to your seat. Change with me," and he rose from his chair.

"Sit still," the other said, bringing his hand down on Bell's knee. "You are a young fool, I tell you. You will never make way in the world if you halt between two opinions. Either act like a man who believes in nobody, or like a man who believes in everybody. Either gush or growl; the world does not understand balancing conscientiousness and subtilising thoughtfulness. It knows nothing of its greatest men. If it regards them at all," said the rough philosopher, "it regards them with as much contempt as you or I feel for those mediæval schoolmen who spent their lives in trying to find out how many archangels could stand simultaneously on the point of a pin."

"Your theories are sufficiently pronounced," Bell could not help saying.

The pick, by the way, he had some short time ago noticed to be leaning up against

the wall, in the farthest corner of the room.

"And I wear corduroy. Don't assume too much, young man. I am not what I am. But I say to you—if you want to make a mark in the world, have opinions, it doesn't matter what—so far as you've your choice; but have some. And let all you say, and do, bear reference to them. Be pig-headed, that's consistency; be tiresome, that's earnestness; be disagreeable, that's self-sacrifice. Let me recommend you to begin by starting, say some political opinions, at once. Politics are a popular and easy subject; for not one man in a thousand hasn't political opinions, and not one man in a thousand knows anything about politics."

"I should think politics were rather stagnant in this neighbourhood," said Bell. "The inhabitants seem to be chiefly occupied with local feuds. I have seen half a

dozen or so of gentlemen's houses round Collington, and I gather that there are as many factions as there are houses. And as there seems to have been no beginning to any of their quarrels, so it seems there will be no end."

"The Villeroys stand by themselves," the navvie said. "Nobody likes them, and nobody behaves well to them. How did you like Clare Vaughton?"

He looked hard at Bell when he said this. But Bell, who felt quite deeply enough about Clare to be put to it when thus abruptly questioned, besides being indignant at hearing her thus familiarly spoken of by such a person, was nevertheless quite able to stand fire, and replied coolly,

"I like Miss Vaughton very much."

"She's what you call good style. She would go down well enough," the other said, "by herself. Last winter she was

asked to Carfax Castle, ten miles off. The Countess of Carfax does the polite to the people when she is down here, and calls, and that sort of thing. Clare was chosen before all the girls who are about here. Honoria Hawtrey cried at the dress-maker's, in Collington, Madame Smythe's, about it."

"Did Miss Vaughton go?"

"No, Clare didn't go. She's an independent girl. She preferred moving in her own sphere, she said, and Honoria Hawtrey was asked after all."

"And Honoria went?" Bell said, absently.

"Honoria went. And I hope," added the speaker, refilling a large Swiss pipe, supported on a chamois hoof—"I hope Madame Smythe, the dress-maker, will charge good interest on the bill for the dresses, and ultimately get the capital. The Hawtreys are as poor as they are proud."

"Indeed," said Bell, his mind wandering

from the Hawtreys. And he rose to go. As they shook hands at the door the other held him, and said,

"You will say nothing about me to the Villeroys, nor to any one else. I thought you were a passing tourist this morning, or I should have made no quotations."

"You may trust a man for once," said Bell. "Good night." And he passed out upon the moonlit road.

CHAPTER VII.

PARTING AND STAYING.

IN a sort of boudoir, where Mrs. Villeroy wasted her mornings in talking about virtue, she recovered from the genuine shock she had clearly experienced. She was hysterical for several minutes, during which time Clare was sedulous in her attentions. Gradually she was bringing Mrs. Villeroy round, when a circumstance occurred which, on the principle, perhaps, of counteraction, completed the patient's recovery. This was the entrance into the room of Luciana Mary, and her announcement in *tremolo* that Frank Irvine had crowned his attentions with an

offer. On hearing this Mrs. Villeroy was herself again directly.

"Thank you, Clare dear," she said, not unkindly. "I don't think I'm going into hysterics. Let me lean back in the chair. And what reply did you make to Mr. Irvine, Luciana Mary darling?"

"I said I would think about it, and I ran out of the room to ask you, ma, what I'd better do. Had I better refuse him the first time?"

"You had better give him a straightforward answer," Clare said, glancing rather scornfully at her cousin, who stood flushed under the light of the lamp.

"Poor Clare!" Luciana Mary said. "Mr. Carteret isn't so attentive as he might be, is he, Clare?"

Somehow so curious an amalgam of feelings came upon Clare at this retort, that she could not reply in a tone that would pass

the matter off. She said nothing, but stooped down, with her face in the shade, and arranged the restoratives in a little medicine-chest. As she did so, a suspicion crossed her for the first time that the interest she took in Bell Carteret was of a kind that, to her, was novel.

"Don't tease Clare, Luciana Mary," Mrs. Villeroy said, pleased with her niece's kindness, and made amiable by the news she had just heard. "Mr. Irvine's friend is an intelligent young man, but dreadfully sarcastic. Those satirists always hate everybody except themselves. Where did you leave Mr. Irvine, Luciana Mary?"

"On the drawing-room hearthrug, mamma."

"Kneeling or standing?" Clare asked.

"Sitting by this time, I should say," Luciana returned. "Well, mamma, what am I to do now?"

Leaning back on the yielding ottoman, upon which Clare had placed her, Mrs. Villeroy, raising her hand to her brow, ruminated.

"Has he kissed your hand yet?" she said at last.

"Lor'! mamma, you don't suppose we are so dignified as all that?" Luciana said pertly.

"I daresay he has got a little further than that," Clare remarked.

Luciana Mary, not deigning any notice of this observation, Mrs. Villeroy said reflectively—

"There is a sad want of dignity now-a-days. When your father proposed to me, he did it by letter on four sheets of foolscap paper, and in the third person, and all his love-letters were written in the same way."

"Well, mamma," Luciana Mary broke in

impatiently, "how long is he to be kept waiting?"

"Somebody had better do something," Clare said. "For my part, Lucy, I wish you joy. I like Mr. Irvine, and I think it will imp—I mean, it will suit your character to have him for a husband."

"That's right, Clare," said Mrs. Villeroy, in high good-humour. "I think," she went on, "that it would be desirable I should go down into the drawing-room myself and speak to Mr. Irvine. You girls stay behind. Oh! but I forgot—I daren't go down the staircase by myself—the ghost!"

"The ghost?" Luciana Mary asked. She knew nothing of what had happened in the avenue and the hall before her arrival.

Clare began to explain, and having accompanied her aunt downstairs, returned to finish the explanation.

Mrs. Villeroy's operations in the drawing-

room resulted, as might have been expected, in Frank Irvine staying to supper, and sitting by Luciana Mary. Mr. Villeroy, who had yet to be made acquainted with the engagement, apologised to Frank for not again experimenting with the percolator.

"That I shall eventually make Pop the national beverage," he said, "I do not doubt. I have been maturing my mechanical invention all day, and would bring it out to-night, but Mrs. Villeroy is a little nervous. Marmaduke, the still hock."

It was observable that Mr. Villeroy seemed to regard effervescing drinks as a panacea rather from a theoretical point of view, and that he stuck, in practice, to more exciting liquids.

The supper, by reason of the presence of the lovers, and the absence of the enlivening percolator, would have been dull enough, but that it was redeemed from the common-

place by one feature. This was the singular conduct of Marmaduke.

That retainer had before shown signs of a dislike of Frank Irvine. But we most of us notice very little the idiosyncracies of servants; and as long as Marmaduke contented himself with serving Frank at table badly and slowly, and glowering at him when unobserved, his distaste was unnoticed. But to-night he went farther. Not only was Frank's plate always slow in arriving, but when it did arrive it never by any chance had the viand on it for which he had asked.

Hence it came about that, not thinking much of the matter in his present frame of mind, Frank, who had designed to take a light supper of cold fowl and nominal pastry, unromantically consumed two enormous German sausages and a thick block of treacle-pudding. Worse than this ensued.

It chanced that Mr. Villeroy, who it has just now been observed was not so enthusiastic in practice as he was in theory against alcohol, had some specially good bottled porter, which he recommended to his guest—telling Marmaduke to unbottle it at the sideboard, on the ground of its effervescent properties.

"Now," said Mr. Villeroy, as Marmaduke brought a brimming glass to Frank. "There's a head for you! Try it."

Frank tried it.

"You don't like it," Mr. Villeroy said, as Frank quickly put down his tumbler.

Indeed, it was hardly to be expected that he would. For Marmaduke, who, with his face turned to the wall, over the sideboard, was grinning with malicious pleasure, had poured about half the contents of a small ink-bottle into the glass, before filling it up.

This, Frank felt, was no time to annoy

Luciana Mary's father. So he answered evasively, and, with some heroism, drained half the glass at once, and the rest—to get the thing over as quickly as possible—a minute after. Marmaduke tried no more subsequent tricks, inasmuch as, when next he came to the table, he caught a look of Frank's, and, if I mistake not, one also of Luciana Mary's.

He was very silent that night in the servants' hall, and played sorrowful tunes on the accordion; with which instrument he was, to some extent, conversant.

Nor was Bell Carteret, smoking his pipe simultaneously alone in the village inn parlour, much more cheerful than the poor serving-lad, to whose sorrows, at some risk to the dignity of my story, I have made allusion.

Bell sat gloomily arranging some articles of attire in his knapsack, which was

laid across his knee. He thought of many things, and the medium through which he saw them was not rose colour. He wondered that Captain Pigot, after being refused by Clare, could be garrulous and cheerful with the rest of his species. He wondered that Captain Pigot could continue respectable.

Looking up to the wall above, Bell saw a picture, such as you may often see in our parlours, a coloured print of a celebrated race-horse, with a large sporting man in tops standing by him, and looking knowing; and likewise a small sporting boy in tight trousers, who looked more knowing still. Bell Carteret wondered that Captain Pigot did not take to the turf, to divert his mind. How *could* he live in the same village with Clare, after having loved her in vain? In the same village! Ah, there was balm in Gilead for Captain Pigot, and it was this neighbour-

hood of his to Clare. *He* could see the honest half-sad eyes and the fair young face, and the grace of form and movement. *He* could witness the cleverness and the kindness of this frank, pure English girl. And so to him, thus privileged, the years might still bring summers. But for Bell Carteret, so Bell Carteret felt, the golden time of life was gone—utterly gone. There was a reason, an irresistible reason, why he must leave her, and leave her for ever, before she might come to care for him. Farewell, to-morrow, to the pleasant land where the multitudes were not, but the hills and rivers took their place. Farewell to the happy dreamy days, to the wind upon the blue hills, and the blue water in the valleys. Back to the unlovely streets, and the selfish ungracious toilers; back to the life the poor struggling school-usher must lead; and Bell's lot was to lead it in the city. And for this life,

no wonder he sat heavily laden there; for this life he must leave the golden land, and for ever and for ever forget it more. He thought how they had companioned each other but a few hours before, and he quoted aloud to himself, in the lonely room, for a sort of melancholy relief—

> "From the meadows your walks have left so sweet,
> That whenever a March wind sighs
> He sets the jewelled print of your feet,
> In violets blue as your eyes,
> To the wooded hollows in which we meet,
> And the valleys of Paradise."

"Thank you," said a voice beside him, Irvine's, who had entered unperceived. "But her eyes are brown, old fellow."

"Whose eyes?" questioned Bell.

"Yes," Frank said, repeating, in his own dreamy way, the last two beautiful lines of his friend's quotation—

> "To the wooded hollows in which we meet,
> And the valleys of Paradise."

"But may I ask to whom you were alluding?"

Bell did not hear him, being again in earnest self-questioning.

"What! have I let it go even so far as this, with myself at least?" he thought.

"May I repeat my question?" Frank said.

"Fool," returned Bell. "Dolt, madman!"

"When a gentleman," Frank expostulated, "mildly asks his intimate friend a harmless question, it is not the correct thing for the friend to reply, 'fool, dolt, madman.'"

"I beg your pardon, Frank," said Bell, looking up. "I wasn't attending. Good-night," and he took up a candlestick and went off abruptly. Frank staid pondering. But he knew what he knew, and had little difficulty in fathoming matters.

Possibly, Frank Irvine knowing more about his friend than Miss Vaughton did, had some aid to his penetration which to

her was not given; for she lay awake that night, puzzling herself why Bell kept aloof, and finding no explanation. Luciana Mary's observation had shown her, like an electric flash, the way in which she was tending. And then she could not but think—at least, hope that Bell's keeping aloof had, for reason, not indifference, but some strange scruple, caused by a reverse feeling. What was that scruple? His poverty? How absurd! What did she care whether he was poor or rich? She would—she paused; the girl had pride enough, even in self-communion, to try to deceive herself that she was not beginning to love him. "He did not love her," she said, looking out, from where she lay, on the stars that shone through her window. "How absurd it was to hope, to think so for a moment!" As for herself, why, she was above the weakness for proclivity to which she had always

despised her cousin Lucy. Captain Pigot, when he proposed to her, handsome as he undoubtedly was, had she ever felt the shadow of a shade of a tender emotion towards Captain Pigot? Never. And, indeed, it was simply an atrocious figment of which Mrs. Villeroy was guilty, when she told Bell that Clare had jilted Pigot, agricultural, military, beautiful-whiskered. But then, having dammed it up for some time, the tide burst over, and Clare knew she loved, and the sweet, secret thing that glorifies life had power on her in those hours of the stars.

Nevertheless, Clare and Bell had, the next morning (when Bell came to take his leave of the Villeroys, leaving Irvine there), a brief and a comparatively indifferent parting. Bell's scruple was in full force (morning is the time for scruples), and he did not give any indubitable

sign whatever. Yet one thing occurred that might have been taken for a token. When Bell entered the drawing-room of Villeroy Lodge, Clare was in it, by herself. She was so pre-occupied that she did not hear him announced; but, hearing the sound of his voice, she looked up surprised, and saw him standing over her. She must have been very much startled. She coloured, and even trembled, and yet there came a glad light into her eyes—a flash, and no more. She dropped a pencil in her confusion, with which, as a sheet of paper that lay beside her on the table bore witness, she had been listlessly sketching. Bell's eye fell on the sketch. It was a mere outline of a hill, but he recognised the Sugarloaf, upon which they two had passed pleasant hours yesterday. Bell, on his part, too, was confused. He was glad of the fall of the pencil, as confused people

are glad of such occurrences. He stooped and picked it up.

"I am come to—to say good-bye, Miss Vaughton."

His eyes dwelt on hers a moment. It is of course proper that people should look one another in the face.

"Thank you," Clare said, taking the pencil, paleness succeeding colour in her face. She was glad that she sat out of the cross-lights, and in the shadows thrown by the curtains. "How awkward of me to drop it! Good-bye. Stop, I will go and fetch my aunt. She would be very sorry to miss saying good-bye to you."

"Before you fetch her, may I detain you a moment?" Bell said, rising from his chair; and Clare turned her face towards him, and stopped, as she was going to the door. "Before you fetch her, I have to thank you, Miss Vaughton, for listening to the trite,

tiresome sarcasms of a lonely, disappointed man. It is very seldom that I have found anything like real sympathy—the world thinks a man's misfortunes are always his faults, and of course it is bound to do so, in self-defence. But I am sure that your sympathy is genuine, and that you understand me—as much, at least, as I understand myself."

"Sympathy is a cheap present," Clare said, in a tone slightly less gracious than usual. Perhaps she was vexed that Bell had said so little in his long speech.

"It is not so worthless as any return that I can make you for it," Bell said, very sadly.

At his tone Clare's vexation passed from her, and gave way to nobler feelings. She raised her eyes to his, and in their soft look he read her love for him. But suddenly recollecting herself, and not waiting to see

whether he returned her look, she flushed scarlet, and made a shy and hasty exit from the room.

She returned ultimately with Mrs. Villeroy. Delighted, upon her son Baker's account, at Bell's immediate departure, that matron quite made up for the brevity of Clare's adieus by the copious mournfulness of her own. She detained Bell Carteret for five minutes, expressing her sorrow at his leave-taking. Clare stood by, and as there was a good deal of frank friendship in her regard for Bell, she, too, when she had recovered herself, expressed her regret. Somehow Bell liked her confusion and silence, and that look of her eyes, best.

"How awkward he must have thought me," she thought, when he had gone.

"Mr. Carteret is not bad-looking, for a clever man, is he, Clare?" Mrs. Villeroy said, favourably disposed to him at present,

on account of his amiable conduct in going away.

Clare coloured, but not at this remark. She had just been looking down on the table for her sketch. It was not to be found. And yet she recollected leaving it close by a papier-mache card-tray when she went for Mrs. Villeroy. A wild feeling came over her, not a painful one; it made her heart beat and her face burn. And the cause of the pleasurable emotion was that she suspected Mr. Bell Carteret of an act of larceny.

"Mr. Bell Carteret is respectable, but too satirical," Mrs. Villeroy said, meditatively adjudicating on his character.

"Why not say at once he is too clever, aunt?"

"You need not fire up so in his defence, Clare," Mrs. Villeroy returned. "Why, you are as angry when he is attacked as Frank Irvine is, child."

"I merely mean," Clare said, "that people do not understand Mr. Carteret's character. As Frank says, he does not profess noble and beautiful sentiments, because he does not feel himself to be consistently noble, and has a dread—morbid, perhaps—of belying his theory by his practice. And, moreover, he acts up to his opinions, so Frank says—and of course you believe Frank!"

"Of course. Though he was quite rude to me when I said Mr. Carteret was satirical."

"I was glad, almost, to find that Frank *could* be rude," Clare said. "Particularly as the only signs of energy I have ever seen him exhibit were shown on behalf of his friend."

"Yes, I excused it on that ground solely," Mrs. Villeroy returned. "Friendship, sincere friendship, is what I have always admired and pined for." And Mrs. Villeroy

looked sentimentally out of the window, in repudiation, as it were, of any more artificial prospect than the Collington hills. "But there is no such thing now-a-days," she said.

"There is between Frank and Mr. Carteret," Clare replied.

"Ah! my dear," returned her aunt, "you do not know the world—you take everything for granted. People are so hypocritical, so insincere, so changeable now-a-days. But I am quite ill when I think of it all. I am not suited to these false and frivolous times, Clare. I should like to have lived when friendship was friendship—among the Greeks and Romans, you know. I read about them at school, those young men, each of whom wanted to have his head cut off instead of the other's. What was his name, and the other young man, you know?"

"Damon and Pythias," Clare suggested.

"But do you think you would have felt equal to having your head cut off, aunt, for your friend?"

"Yes, or I should have despised myself," Mrs. Villeroy replied.

"Mr. Carteret," Clare said, "would tell you that you would find more difficulty in the sacrifice, if it came to the point, than you expected."

"You evidently have forgotten Baker, who is so desperately attached to you, and have taken to Mr. Carteret, who does not care about you," Mrs. Villeroy said, with angry rudeness.

"More than he has to me," Clare replied, in a constrained tone. "I like him because his opinions are not what those of most are, mere recreations."

Mrs. Villeroy hardly followed this last remark, and did not reply to it. She began to fear, instead, that her son Baker's chance of his cousin was a small one.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. VILLEROY IS CONSIDERABLY SURPRISED.

AFFAIRS at Villeroy Lodge went on as might have been expected during the few days that immediately followed Bell Carteret's departure. Clare, as before intimated, had lost her spirits, and Mrs. Villeroy, whose own were very high just now, was in a good humour, and pronounced her much improved, and less satirical (satire was regarded by this lady as a deadly sin; the virtues which have their share in its birth being little known to her). Improved Clare might be, but she was not happy. She frequented no more the sloping lanes and breezy downs that lay at the

foot of the hills which began to the west of Collington. The English classics, whom she inclined much to peruse, remained on the library shelves at the Lodge just now, or, gorgously bound and illustrated, led an undisturbed though ostentatious existence on the drawing-room table. For neither Mr. nor Mrs. Villeroy, nor Luciana Mary, nor Baker Villeroy was literary, and Clare, who had been wont to make up for their neglect in some measure, was now as indifferent as were they to poetry or history.

In brief, her wonted pleasures had no longer any charm for the girl. She was gentle, but she was listless. She went about the house with a step as heavy as it had once been light, and it was even a hard task to her to assist the pastimes of the infant Frederick, and to interest herself as formerly in his rocking-horse.

Still she found herself not so apathetic as to be indifferent about the cause of the reserve displayed towards her by Bell Carteret. On this theme she pondered much. Sometimes when taking turn and turn about with the infant Frederick she careered for his pleasure on his fiery charger. She had no confidante. Unacquainted, as yet, with the tender passion, the infant Frederick was, of course, in this matter useless. She was likely to get but cold comfort out of her female relations; nor did her uncle seem suitable for the purpose.

She could not help fancying that she had noted in Bell's manner, besides the affair of the sketch, some hints of an interest he took in her; and when she had asked herself about two hundred times the question—"Why was he so reserved?"—"Why did he go away so soon?" she became decisively inclined to one of two conclusions that had,

in the first instance, suggested itself to her. She thought there must be, on his part, a prior engagement, or, at least, attachment. This supposition had at once its thorns and its roses. For though it was somewhat hopeless, it was pleasant, in that it made her think he really was interested in her. It would not be, she knew, out of consideration for her feelings that he had gone away, for she had given no sign whatever. This was true in fact, as well as in her own thought; and, on the whole, she was not without some hope—engagements were sometimes broken off—at least, she was not without consolation. Neither did she despair supposing that her other supposition was the true explanation of Bell's conduct. This supposition was that Bell had left her from motives of pride, feeling himself too poor to ask an heiress to be his wife without incurring the suspicion of the world.

All these reflections, as has been stated, Clare kept to herself, till, upon a certain day, it chanced that her uncle asked her to take a walk with him, and the two went a long one. For Mr. Villeroy had hit on a new invention, and had his confidences to impart as much as she. The percolator, after several private experiments in Marmaduke's pantry, had extinguished itself in a second public trial, more disastrous even than the first; for whereas in the former only Marmaduke suffered, in this everybody at table was more or less drenched. The percolator, as even Mr. Villeroy saw, was a failure. But a newer, if not a grander, idea now occurred to his mind. He took Clare on a long walk, and expounded it. He pointed out, as they went along the summer lanes, how large an amount of small social inconvenience was at present caused by umbrellas—how awkward, for instance,

it was, he said, when two friends were walking together with only one umbrella; the invariable result was that, from a mistaken but praiseworthy unselfishness, both got wet. How awkward, again, when a large party were all provided with umbrellas! Suppose it came on to rain; everybody became perforce unsociable under his or her own shelter, and the party was compelled to spread itself over a large area, which, in a town especially, was most inconvenient.

"Now, my dear," said Mr. Villeroy, pausing at a stile, "all this I shall obviate by an idea which only requires a few more modifications to mature into a result."

"A more successful one than the percolator, uncle, I hope," Clare said, with a faint smile.

"Never mind the percolator," Mr. Villeroy returned, looking a little foolish. "My failure with the percolator will be forgotten."

"Your monster velocipede did make some mark," Clare said.

"Yes," Mr. Villeroy replied. "But posterity, I trust, will remember me as the inventor of what I shall name, at least in my first prospectuses, 'The Magnum Bonum Umbrella.' Supported on a single stick, the *magnum bonum* umbrella will afford a sufficient shelter to six persons. By-the-way, I have not *quite* settled the nomenclature. It has sometimes struck me that 'The Mammoth Mushroom' would take better with the public. What is your idea, Clare?"

Now, to tell the truth, Clare had not been listening lately, and when her uncle unexpectedly turned upon her for a suggestion, she had not followed him sufficiently to give one.

"Clare, you have been thinking of something else," her uncle said. She is in love, he thought, girls are always in love more or

less. "Clare," he resumed aloud, "you must be in love."

"With Captain Pigot, I suppose," she returned, with an attempt at ease.

"That young Mr. Carteret more likely," said her uncle.

His niece's face had generally but a faint flush, but now it flamed a genuine scarlet. And Mr. Villeroy—as, indeed, how could he help it?—read her secret.

"Poor child," he said gently, taking her hand, "no wonder you do not feel competent to decide between 'The Mammoth Mushroom' and 'The Magnum Bonum.'—My dear girl, tell me how far it has gone."

Clare Vaughton was not a weak-minded girl; but the sternest of the stronger sex even have times when pent-up feeling suddenly breaks forth. Clare, now, was touched and softened by her uncle's kind tone (to speak the truth, Mr. Villeroy was fonder of

his niece than of his daughter). She stopped by a gate on the roadside and burst into tears. And then she told Mr. Villeroy as much as the reader knows.

Mr. Villeroy was more acute in ordinary matters than hitherto, perhaps, he may have seemed. He quite agreed with Clare that Bell had shown more than an ordinary interest in her, and he was inclined to think that Bell's poverty was the cause of his abrupt departure; for to the other theory Mr. Villeroy pointed out an objection. This was that, if Bell had been honourable enough to stop a flirtation on the ground of a prior engagement, he would have been honourable enough to have taken care that the prior engagement should be known before flirting at all.

"You can hardly call it a flirtation, uncle," Clare said. "I am not a flirt."

"Well," said Mr. Villeroy, "it's a wide term. But I'll see what can be done, my

dear—I'll see what can be done. I like the young man—and you're rich enough for both. Besides, he has brains as well as good looks. I'll turn it over, and at present, my dear, we'll say nothing to your aunt."

At breakfast the following morning, Mrs. Villeroy (who was in high feather just now, and seemed to have quite got over the ghost) was informed by her husband that he was going to the north—to the great manufacturing city, in fact, of Magglesford, on business.

"Very well," said Mrs. Villeroy, with equanimity. "I would particularly caution you against tumbling off the foot-boards of the railway carriages, and taking more than is good for you in the refreshment-rooms.'

"I am not in the habit of getting drunk at railway stations," Mr. Villeroy returned, rather irascibly.

"Temptation is always at hand, and men are such creatures," Mrs. Villeroy said.

"Even Captain Pigot has sometimes appeared to me to be immoderately exhilarated after supper. But, Mr. Villeroy, if you will condescend to listen to a suggestion of your wife's without flying into a passion, I would remind you that, as you are going to try to get into Parliament, you had better be present at the forthcoming match between The Howling Flute-players and the Tootling Ojibbeways."

"The Howling Ojibbeways and the Tootling Flute-players, if you please," Baker observed, chipping his seventh egg.

"Very well," Mr. Villeroy said. "I'll make a point of it."

But, if it may be allowed to allude to events out of their due course, I may here state that Mr. Villeroy failed to mollify his future constituents by being present at this particular cricket-match. For though, by cross-country work, not much more than

half a day is spent in going from Collington to Magglesford, and though Mr. Villeroy started four days before the match, yet he did not even arrive at Magglesford before the day that immediately preceded it. A series of misfortunes happened to him on his travels. First he got into a wrong train at a junction, and was twenty miles on the further side of Magglesford before he discovered his mistake; then, trying back the next morning, he fell into an exceedingly animated scientific discussion with a stranger of gentlemanly appearance, and in the course of it gave a full description of "The Magnum Bonum," which, as he afterwards admitted was injudicious. Still more injudicious, as the opinion would have been of all practical people, was his omitting, in the warmth of argument, to notice another junction at which he ought to have changed carriages. Consequently, he found himself, in the after-

noon of the following day, rapidly making the best of his way back to Collington. Returning, he remembered the junction this time, and got out; but, being struck, as a future M.P., with an idea that trouble and expense would be saved if, instead of spouting at Westminster, members stayed at home and telegraphed their speeches to the morning papers, he imparted this notion to the telegraph clerk; and while thus engaged, was again left behind. At last, however, he did get to Magglesford. He went to a hotel, and having examined a directory, found that Bell Carteret was therein inserted as an under-master at "the Magglesford Proprietary School." To this establishment Mr. Villeroy forthwith found his way without difficulty, as it was situated at the other end of the main street in which the hotel was; but, on inquiry, he found that Bell Carteret was absent that morning. Mr. Vil-

leroy did not leave his name with the school porter, but went away, determining to remain for another day in Magglesford, and to call again.

As he returned up the main street, he became conscious of an unusual bustle. On both sides of the street many of the passers-by were stopping to stare at what appeared to Mr. Villeroy to be some sort of vehicle advancing towards him, on which, as upon a fire-engine, rising above a crowd of shouting, running idlers, a number of men were seated, in the manner of firemen, but having the appearance more or less of gentlemen. At first Mr. Villeroy took little or no interest in this spectacle, and was included amongst those who did not stop on the street footways to look at it. He walked on, thinking of the errand on which he had come to Magglesford; but, suddenly, as he met the procession, he stopped, as if transfixed, and

his indifference was changed to interest of the deepest kind. He rushed into the middle of the street, as excited as the wildest boy who was shouting and running by the side of the advancing vehicle. He rapidly made his way to where he got a good view of it as it came along.

"Now then, old gentleman," one of the crowd said, whom Mr. Villeroy, in his eagerness, had pushed aside.

"He's none reet in his yead," said an operative, in the northern dialect, looking attentively at Mr. Villeroy.

Mr. Villeroy was by this time gesticulating, and being borne along, a prominent object, by the crowd.

"You villains!" Mr. Villeroy exclaimed, raising his arm, and shaking his fist at the advancing vehicle—"you've infringed my rights! you've taken advantage of my not having a patent!" he vociferated.

But the occupants of the vehicle did not hear his voice—that was drowned in the shouting of the surrounding ragamuffins—and rolled on their way, leaving him behind, gasping with fury and fatigue at his sudden exertion.

"What's the matter, sir?" one of those asked, who had noticed, with some amazement, Mr. Villeroy's demeanour.

"It's my velocipede that these young fellows are riding on," Mr. Villeroy returned, puffing and panting. "My own stolen invention, confound their impudence!"

Mr. Villeroy, though vastly enraged, still was beginning to feel, as a county magistrate and future M.P., a little ashamed of his ebullience of feeling, which was certainly excusable, inasmuch as it was aggravating for him to find that the only invention he had ever achieved, which had not utterly collapsed, was pirated. Some ingenious, but unscru-

pulous persons had revivified the monster velocipede, and from henceforth, Mr. Villeroy indignantly reflected as he walked away, would have the credit of the invention.

"Why didn't I patent it?" he said to himself over and over again. He walked several hundred yards without the least idea whither he was going; and so, diverging from the main street, lost his way in tortuous Magglesford.

He was first recalled to a sense of his position by rain beginning to fall, against which, as he was not accompanied by the "magnum bonum," or any other umbrella, he was unprotected. It came on faster and faster, having overtaken him in a very out-of-the-way and quiet corner of the town to which he had strayed. The day was dark, the houses high, the streets narrow; everything which Mr. Villeroy saw, as he looked round him, was dull and dingy, the sombreness heightened, as is the

case, from the force of contrast, in all by-ways of a town when its highways are near. But the darkest, dullest object of all which Mr. Villeroy saw, was a little church, that stood at the corner of the street in which he had stopped to look about for shelter from the increasing rain. It was a grey stone church, with its walls made many shades darker by time and the ever-floating dirt of the neighbourhood. The stone had been chipped in many places by natural decay, or idle boys, or other causes, but it was very little lighter in colour where the chipping had taken place, having been speedily begrimed over again by the dusty dirty atmosphere. An ugly, depressing little church, as plainly built as a dissenting Zion; but the door was open, and Mr. Villeroy, to shelter himself, walked in. He found it darker by many degrees within than without, an effect which heavy galleries, and a very small allowance of lancet-

shaped windows, helped materially to produce. Mr. Villeroy, however, though he could not see anything distinctly in such a gloom, observed figures at the far end of the church, and heard low voices. Going in a little farther, he perceived that the ceremony of marriage was being performed. There were no bridesmaids, but the bride's father seemed a portly person enough, tall, large, with a rubicund face, the features of which Mr. Villeroy failed in the indistinct light to distinguish, and with his thumbs placed in the armlet holes of his waistcoat. He half faced Mr. Villeroy, who, when he saw him, started slightly, and then very quietly stepped into a high pew next the door. The faces of the bride and bridegroom were turned towards the altar of course, at which they were kneeling; and Mr. Villeroy did not heed them much, beyond observing that the bridegroom was tall, but he narrowly watch-

ed the person who appeared to be the bride's father from his pew. It was the pew of most consideration in the church, for a brass rod ran round the top of it, upon which hung a curtain. This curtain Mr. Villeroy drew in such a manner that he could now continue his observations unobserved.

During the whole of the short time which was occupied by the performance of the rite, Mr. Villeroy, thus screened, watched the portly gentleman with his thumbs in the armlet holes of his white waistcoat, and watched only him; and directly the bridal party began to make their way, which they did on the other side of the church, towards the vestry, Mr. Villeroy left off kneeling on the seat of his pew and squinting between the curtains, and dropped down into a sitting attitude, with an expression on his face, still, of thought and uncertainty. He employed his time, while the others were in

the vestry, in arranging the curtain so as to get a good view of their approaching exit from the church, at the point where the light from without could first strike upon them as they passed into the little porch. And then he waited, muttering to himself a little—to some such effect as this—

"It must be so, the scamp! Why shouldn't it be? Nothing so very extraordinary."

And now they came out of the vestry, and Mr. Villeroy muttered no longer, but climbed upon the seat again and knelt, peering cautiously between the rings of the curtain, where it was linked to one of the upright rods.

"It's nobody else," he said to himself. "Is the girl his daughter, I wonder? She's more modest than he ever was, judging from the thickness of her veil."

And with these hasty reflections, Mr.

Villeroy drew his face back and, still, unobserved, placed himself in such a position that he could not see the unconscious bridal party till it passed his line of sight at the point he has before been mentioned to have chosen. He had only half a minute to wait, which he did without much anxiety, for he had simply to make assurance doubly sure.

But directly the bride and bridegroom came under his expectant eyes, Mr. Villeroy betrayed an astonishment which, considering he had not before thought it worth his while to take much notice of either of them, was remarkable. He was within an ace of falling off the seat of the pew, and he actually did slip upon a hassock and overturn it, without, however, making any noise. And when the portly gentleman went by with an easy and unconscious air, Mr. Villeroy did not observe him at all even. He

had indeed, at last, seen something that he deemed really extraordinary; for in the bridegroom he recognised the man to whom he had come many necessary and some unnecessary miles—recognized, to his great surprise and greater sorrow, Bell Carteret!

CHAPTER IX.

THE GUERILLA.

TO account for Bell Carteret's appearance in a position which may possibly surprise the reader little less than it did Mr. Villeroy, it will be necessary to revert to the days during which that gentleman was making efforts to reach Magglesford.

On the evening, then, of one of these days, there sat, in a private room of a hotel which the literary men of Magglesford affected, no fewer than nine disappointed geniuses. In appearance the nine, like the dingy apartment they occupied, were melancholy; in conversation they were, on the whole, dull, in attire they were shabby.

You might have judged, seeing them, that literature, though it existed, yet did not thrive at Magglesford. They were met to make arrangements for the establishment of a weekly local publication.

"Is there any chance?" a forlorn-looking man, who sat by the fireplace, asked. "Is there any chance of this new 'weekly' paying, think you?"

"None whatever," a long-legged young man with no whiskers, and very pointed collar, replied.

"I trust there is of its paying its contributions," observed a pensive person, who had been sitting staring for the last quarter of an hour at a big waxen apple on the mantelpiece.

"Is there any chance of this editor turning up in the course of the evening?" asked the least cheerless-looking man of the nine, removing a tankard from his lips with a

Junonian sweep of the arm, and setting it down.

"We've been waiting now half an hour," the long-legged young man said, looking at his watch, which just now was in his own keeping. "My idea is, Mr. Flucker, that in ten minutes more he'll turn up. He's keeping us waiting on principle."

"He'd better keep his dignity to himself, if he wants me to write for him," Mr. Flucker said.

"Ah! Flucker, it's all very well for you," said the long-legged young man. "You've a position in literature." (Mr. Flucker conducted a not unsuccessful Magglesford weekly, of a commercial cast.) "But we poor beggars daren't venture on the indignant. We get kicked pretty liberally for our halfpence!"

"I wonder you don't give up literature," Mr. Flucker said. "But the London Maga-

zines have taken some of your articles, haven't they?"

"Two," returned the long-legged young man.

"Indeed!" said the pensive person, turning his eyes from the wax apple to which they had reverted. And he looked at the long-legged young man with some admiration.

"I've been writing for five years," said the latter, "and I don't find the work remunerative, considering the time expended."

Mr. Flucker laughed in a superior manner.

"Persevere," he said, "and you will perhaps succeed. How many articles did you say have been taken—two?"

"Were you paid for the two?" the pensive person asked.

"Not for the first," the long-legged young man replied.

"For the second?" the pensive person interrupted.

"Well," the long-legged young man said, "I think I may get something for that. The publishers who owned the magazine in which it was inserted have failed since, and I have heard from their solicitor to the effect that in about a year's time they will pay a dividend of two and three pence in the pound."

"It's not very encouraging, certainly. You might try a book instead of separate articles," Flucker said.

"A volume of poetry, I suppose," sarcastically replied the long-legged young man, arranging his collar. "If it's about as good as Tennyson, the first edition would sell off in five years, and I should owe my publisher then perhaps ten pounds. Or a novel. Send it round the trade, and perhaps, if I'm very lucky, find a publisher who'll bring it out at his own expense, in consideration of his sweeping up all profits. And this to be ignored by half the reviews, and slated by the

other half; and, if I write about human nature as I find it, and tell the truth, to be publicly libelled as vulgar, conceited, ignorant, silly, clumsy, dull, unedifying, with insinuations that I am given to drink, or to worse things. In short, to go in for fame, and to get infamy."

Mr. Flucker had by this time emptied his tankard and filled his pipe.

"Haven't you ever written a novel?" he asked.

"Several."

"What has become of them?"

"They're lying about in old boxes and places," the long-legged young man said. "The last is going the round. It began to travel a year and a half ago, and five publishers wish me to believe that they have looked at it. The fifth sent it back with his compliments last week, and I had to pay the carriage. I rather think they know it

at the station. I heard the boy chuckle as I signed the book; and when I took it down yesterday to send it off again, I heard them all sniggling behind the counter of the parcels' office as I went away."

"With such an imagination, you ought to do something," Mr. Flucker remarked. "Have *you* ever tried fiction, George?" he said, looking to one of the silent *litterateurs*.

George admitted a course of experience somewhat similar to that of the long-legged young man, and, conversation becoming more general, it was discovered that every man in the room had written one or more novels, except Mr. Flucker and the pensive gentleman. The latter, it appeared, disdaining the vehicle through which Cervantes and Thackeray conveyed their ideas, had consecrated his pen to poetry. Enumerated, it was found that the novels composed by these eight gifted beings amounted to twen-

ty-seven, all of which were as yet in manuscript. But just as everyone was beginning to find the conversation rather interesting, the door was opened, and there entered a new-comer. He was of middle age, gracious of aspect and genial of eye, with his hair brushed very hard back from his forehead. His appearance, naturally portly, was enhanced in that respect by a white waistcoat, and his thumb stuck in the armlets of the same habiliment. This was the expected editor.

His greetings were so cordial, his manner so free from reserve, that even Mr. Flucker, who had a fine sense of his own dignity, forgot to stand on it, and condoned the delay. As for the eight disappointed geniuses, they were so much influenced by the good-humour of the stranger, that for a few moments he soothed their melancholy, and drove their grief away. Two or three of

them even smiled, and all assented with alacrity to his desire that, at his expense, every man should order what he liked.

Provision of glasses having been made in accordance with this idea, and candles having been brought—for it was now dusk—the convener of the meeting rose and explained its object.

"He had asked them," he said, "to meet him that day, because some of them were the best known"—here he looked towards Mr. Flucker, who, in his fine manner, bowed, removing, with an air of elegance, a long pipe from his mouth for a moment—"the best known literary men in Magglesford, and the rest were likely to become so"—here he looked towards the long-legged young man, who, however, had relapsed by this time, and barely acknowledged this compliment by a melancholy nod. "They all knew," the speaker went on, "that it

was in contemplation to establish a weekly serial in Magglesford. It must have struck them, observant, intelligent persons, that as they walked through the streets of Magglesford, huge, populous, opulent as the great town was, it nevertheless had an appearance, on the whole, which was neither elegant nor comfortable. It wanted something. Now came the question what was that something? What was it that Magglesford wanted to become, if not elegant, at least comfortable? Was it parks? No, for it had parks. Was it statues? No, for statues rose in its squares. Was it omnibuses? No; he had tumbled off one which would not stop for him that morning."

At this point Mr. Flucker, as was expected of him, laughed, and two of the melancholy eight smiled faintly, which, perhaps, was as much as could be expected of *them*.

"If, then," continued the speaker, "Mag-

glesford wanted neither parks, nor statues, nor omnibuses, and still wanted something, what was that something? That something, gentlemen"—and the orator here smote the table till the glasses rang—"that something was a weekly serial. Without a weekly serial, Magglesford was uncomfortable; *with* a weekly serial the husbands of Magglesford would become domestic, the wives affectionate; age would cease to be querulous, and childhood to be troublesome; the lovers of Magglesford would whisper softer nothings, and the literary men of Magglesford would more frequently have occasion to smile."

After this flight, the orator paused, and Mr. Flucker, in his turn, smote the table applausively, feebly seconded by the pensive gentleman and party. Certainly there was nothing in the future orator's speech, at present, which gave any just ground for

confidence in the proposed undertaking. Perhaps he perceived as much, for now he sank to business—

"The proprietary was possessed of sufficient capital to guarantee immediate payment for contributions. He himself, he might say, had sunk money in the affair." (Here Mr. Flucker, who applauded, found himself well followed up.) "However, to be brief—he much feared he had wasted their valuable time by his late arrival—the aim of the serial was to be both literary and local. While it endeavoured to refine the taste and enlarge the intellect of Magglesford, it would not forget to—to——"

"Throw as much dirt as it dared on all the respectable people in the town," said the long-legged young man, *sotto voce*, to the pensive genius who sat next him.

"To," the speaker went on, "to serve indigenous interests by an uncompromising

and fearless exposure of social pharisaism and municipal mismanagement. Nor would they shrink from handling topics, by ignoring which other journals are professedly anxious to serve public morality."

"He means he'll rake up every filthy scandal that disgraces the town, and placard it all over Magglesford, to sell the paper," confided the long-legged young man to his friend. "There's no doubt that he is going in for the Holywell Street business—and not a bad idea either, so far as filthy lucre is concerned."

"And we shall try," went on the editor, "to attract the younger and innocently volatile class of readers by—by——"

"Low jokes and *double entendres*," said the commentator.

"By flashes of facetiousness that will fill up columns neatly—the trick of the trade, you know, gentlemen," and the editor

laughed as he made this concession to human weakness; "and by such Attic salt as makes life's beef and mutton palatable. To proceed to the departmental part of the business in hand," the orator continued, "our political *resumé*, in which we shall endeavour to maintain the calm severity which any of you, gentlemen, who have ascended in a balloon, may have found above the tempest—our political weekly *resumé* will be the composition of Mr. Flucker; and I venture to say, gentlemen, that in his hands it will be caustic as Junius, yet just as Hallam."

Hereat Mr. Flucker bowed over his brandy and water, and waved his hand with that touch of the princely which was his manner. "Our social slashers—if I may be permitted the term—will proceed from the trenchant pen of Mr. Tomlinson."

Mr. Tomlinson, who was identical with the long-legged young man, nodded briefly.

"These matters have, in part, been previously arranged. Now I have to ask you, gentlemen—I am empowered to do so by the proprietary," and the speaker tried to look simultaneously at the six disappointed geniuses who had been silent throughout the proceedings—"to inform me whether you are open to produce articles on topics of local interest—aldermanic disputes, dramatic and semi-dramatic entertainments, clerical manifestations, sporting matters of the district, deficiencies of public servants, moral misdemeanours, especially of the upper-classes, piquantly described, but at the same time represented in the severe light in which they appear to the virtuous. There are in this city, gentlemen, as the last census informs us, upwards of half a million of people. Now, gentlemen, I see six of you before me, six young men of talent, and I doubt not of industry. Suppose

you devote yourselves to the discovery of scandals which otherwise would be hushed up. Any little *liaison*, for instance; there is nothing people like reading so well as the account of an affair of this kind, related, as I have said, with due regard to piquancy and to virtue. I will venture to say that the issue of a paper which contained an *exposé* of this kind would sell in Magglesford to the number of fifty thousand copies. This in particular;—in general, may I ask you six gentlemen if you will give me your aid in the manner I have described?"

The six disappointed geniuses remained silent, but by murmurs, gurgles, and shufflings, appeared to intimate that they would be only too glad to turn an honest penny in the manner suggested.

The editor re-filled his glass from a caraffe of whisky that stood by it, sugared and watered it duly; drank, and resumed—

"For poetical contributions, Mr. Blagg, I hope that we may look to you."

And for his own part he looked at the pensive man.

"I understand," replied that bard, "that you don't mean to pay more than seven and sixpence a column. Now, besides other points of superiority, poetry is much harder to make, of course, than prose. You want, I take it, serious and sentimental verses, to give a contrast?"

"Yes," the editor said, twirling his spoon.

"Then, for sentimental verse, I think you ought to pay, at least, ten shillings a column," remarked the poet.

"I fear, Mr. Blagg," the editor said, in politest tones, "that I could not conscientiously recommend the proprietary to advance —much as it desires to enlist your gift—on the ordinary terms. Poetry in Magglesford,

at least, would not sell one copy of the paper. It is not the sort of writing which pays, in fact. Good poetry, such as yours, Mr. Blagg, would give a stamp to our serial, but little more. In fact, this is the only reason which would induce us to care to retain the services of a poet. So I fear we must not say more than seven-and-sixpence."

"You should versify the Decameron," Tomlinson remarked. "That might take in Magglesford, broadened a little."

"May I hope, Mr. Blagg, that, ar, that your eye will roll in a fine frenzy hebdomadally?" the editor added, in a wheedling tone.

"Seven-and-sixpence a column isn't enough," the poet returned, dolefully regardless of the editor's last flight. "I shall only give him two rhymes for every four lines," he added, in an undertone, to one of the silent geniuses who sat next him.

Another of this sextet was meanwhile mustering up courage to say something. He went red, fidgeted with his wristbands, rammed his scarfpin tighter in, pulled out his pocket-handkerchief; and with it, unintentionally, an apple, which slid along the table, and made him look rather silly.

Colouring very much at this *contretemps*, he said, "Have you fixed the name, Mr. Foothorape?" And having thus addressed the editor, the silent man collapsed, with a painful consciousness that he had fallen into an inextricable attitude of body which betrayed nervousness.

"I forgot, gentlemen; the proprietary has had five meetings, at each of which a new name was adopted; but we have finally determined to call our weekly venture 'The Guerilla,' a term somewhat misty to the mind of the million, which is as it should be, and gives an attraction, and which will, never-

theless, be eminently typical of our scope."

"The news-boy will call it the gorilla," said Mr. Flucker. "Is that desirable, think you?"

"The news-boys and the public," the editor said, looking monosibically at Mr. Flucker over his white waistcoat, "have forgotten all about the gorilla. We shall be safe. And now, gentlemen, time flies. What do you say to bottled stout and Welsh rarebits, at the expense of the proprietary?"

This proposition was received with much favour, and even chased the cloud from the brow of the poet Blagg. Some general conversation followed, in which no less than three of the silent men took part. Indeed, when the simple repast was over, several of these blighted and taciturn beings became even garrulous—a consequence, perhaps, of the gradual soaking process to which they had submitted themselves throughout the evening. Mr. Flucker, who was a very respect-

able man, and a strong conservative, though he edited a radical paper, went home early; as also did the poet Blagg. They were followed by Mr. Foothorape the editor whom, walking home tolerably steadily in his white waistcoat, we will accompany, leaving the five geniuses and Tomlinson.

CHAPTER X.

MR. AND MISS FOOTHORAPE.

MR. FOOTHORAPE, his wide white waistcoat shining under the gas-lamps, and his thumbs retorted to the armlets of his waistcoat, meandered home—not, however, "with uncontrolled meanderings." His course was made tortuous by reason of streets, not of alcohol, and he had to turn and twist much from street to street of the great city of Magglesford. At last, in a narrow and not very inviting *cul de sac*, he came to a small and not very inviting house, before which he stopped. He had walked very slowly, and seeemed in no hurry to lift the knocker, but stood listening outside.

In the silence broken by the occasional tramp of some one, like himself, returning home late, he heard a ringing voice, clear, powerful, and accurately toned. It was the voice of a woman singing, and singing very well, to the piano; and it came from the house before him.

"I wonder," he said to himself, holding the knocker in his hand, "if that girl cares now for any mortal thing, or immortal thing, for the matter of that, except her music?"

And now the singing stopped, and Mr. Foothorape knocked. He heard, presently, a bolt drawn inside, and a voice interrogating, "Father?"

"It's me," returned the editor, not too grammatically. And the door was opened by a pale, dark-haired girl, who, in lights that favoured her weak point, her complexion, must often have looked handsome.

But she was evidently unhappy. There was nothing to be expected from that greeting of father and daughter; for he had perhaps only parted from her three or four hours ago; but, somehow, you would have gathered that there was something wrong with the girl, and that the something was permanent. We all lose some of our natural innocent gladness out of our countenances, the instinctive smile is less ready with us as the lustres pass; but that pale face had clearly, even in youth, lost all but heaviness and bitterness—there remained no honest elasticity in the soul that looked through it with a sort of sullen acquiescence that in desperate moments grew gay, but not glad.

"It's close on eleven, Pauline," Mr. Foothorape said, coming up the highest step. "Over-late for singing."

"Over-late for drinking," the girl said.

"I've not been drinking," said Mr. Footh-

orape, with some latitude, as he placed his stick in a rickety umbrella-stand.

"Then you've been spending money in some other way, I suppose?" Pauline remarked.

Mr. Foothorape struck an attitude which, in spite of the narrowness of the passage, was made an imposing one by means of his thumbs and his white waistcoat.

"I have been privileged to-night to offer to struggling genius that pecuniary reward which a sordid world is so reluctant to confer!"

"You have been drinking, or you would keep that fustian for fools. 'The Guerilla,' I suppose?" the girl added briefly, and led the way into the parlour, where, as a piano faced with stained and dingy silk showed, she had lately been sitting. The two entered and sat down—the girl on a frayed horse-hair couch, Mr. Foothorape on a low

round-backed smoking-chair, covered with grimy chintz.

"'The Guerilla,'" Mr. Foothorape assented, throwing himelf back in this receptacle. "I say, Pauline, there was some cold fowl left at dinner, wasn't there?"

"Bother!" Pauline said. "Haven't you had your supper?"

"I've had a snack," Mr. Foothorape returned. "But I've been speechifying, and it gives me an appetite."

"A pretty pack of nonsense you've talked, and a nice lot of lies you've told!"

"It's not usual for a daughter to talk to her father like that," Mr. Foothorape said, feebly remonstrating, but evidently powerless in the smoking-chair before his cross-grained daughter. "It's filial ingratitude. But I forgive you, Pauline. *Is* there a wing of that fowl left?"

"No, there isn't," said Pauline; "but there's a leg and a back."

"Fetch them, there's a good girl, and I'll pick them," the editor said.

"How tiresome and greedy you are!" the daughter answered. But she rose, went out, and returned with some not very inviting remnants, and a knife and fork.

The editor drew up his chair to the table and fell to with alacrity, though he was not allowed either salt or beer. It was too late to go out for the latter, and the former Miss Foothorape said was locked up. She waited in silence for some time while her father ate, and at last said,

"Of course you have screwed nothing out of Frank Irvine, or you would have called here instead of going straight from the railway station to the meeting. What did he say?"

The editor busied himself with his plate.

"Nothing," he returned.

"Nothing! Why, you stupid creature, then you never asked him?"

"Well, my dear, you see, I thought that in the first instance, as one cannot be too cautious in schemes of this kind, it would be better merely to reconnoitre."

His daughter gave a gentle shrug of contempt.

"Reconnoitre, indeed!" she said—"you mean that, when the matter came really close to you, you shirked it, with your usual cowardice. And you have had all this long railway journey to your loss, and not to your gain."

"I followed him to a pic-nic, but I could not catch him alone," Mr. Foothorape said.

"However," Pauline observed, "we must draw that last five-and-twenty from the bank, till they pay you some salary for 'The Guerilla.'"

"Well, Pauline, dear, you see, in fact, I don't like drawing it. It might be desirable to save it to help Harry back to

America. He is going to the devil here."

"It is his duty to follow in the footsteps of his father," Pauline observed, "and his father has already gone."

"Your remarks are a little abrupt, my dear," Mr. Foothorape said, with an evident struggle to control his temper. "I suppose you have seen Harry during my absence? How is the dear boy?"

But Mr. Foothorape's attempt to change the subject was unavailing. The girl stamped her foot.

"It's my belief that you've taken the money out already," she said; and so saying, withdrew the remnant of defunct poultry from under the very nose of her sire.

"Don't be in such a tantrum, Pauline," said that rhetorician, reaching out for the dish.

But Pauline withdrew it further.

"Now," she said, "what are you besides salaried editor?"

"She'll know some time," reflected Foothorape. "What a fury she is! I'd better tell her." His thumbs went into their favourite position, and he said, as easily as he could, "I'm one of the proprietary."

"You *have* taken the money out of the bank, then, and thrown it into the gutter—you idiot!" And so saying, Miss Foothorape took up the fowl with her own hands, and flung it across the table at her father. Plump it went into the white waistcoat.

Mr. Foothorape picked up off his knee the singular missile which his daughter had thrown at him. He appeared to treat the occurrence as an ordinary one, and, indeed, such outbreaks on the part of Pauline were not unfrequent. Her unhappiness and uncontrolled temper were vented sometimes in passionate displays such as this—a bad sign always, and a symptom which sets in

when human nature has sunk to a lower level than that of good principles.

Still, Mr. Foothorape's daughter did not spend all her time in throwing drumsticks at her fellow-creatures, and to-day things had certainly been very contrary. The butcher, the baker, the general dealer had called for their bills; the poor-rate collector had intimated that a new impost of one shilling in the pound was instituted, in addition to a very recent exaction; and the lodger, a young man who, as a lodger, was all that could be wished—he read Mrs. Wood's novels, and only once caused trouble when he was ill from a surfeit of crumpets—the lodger had given notice. So Pauline was, not unnaturally, irritable this evening. People express their feelings in different ways, and while Pauline condensed hers in a sullen fashion, till they broke out suddenly and alarmingly, as we have seen,

her father made the most of his from the beginning, in a diffuse and superficial fashion. His white waistcoat, smeared from its contact with the cold chicken, went up and down with indignation, while he tiraded against sordid tradesmen and unequal governments.

Slowly recovering from the extreme violence of her passion, Pauline meanwhile paced the room to and fro with compressed lips and absent thoughts, heedless of her father's diatribe. When the editor's eloquence was, for the time, exhausted, she stopped in her walk, and said,

"Bell Carteret has been here to-day. He told me he was prepared to marry me; that the engagement had lasted far too long, and that it must be broken off unless we were married at once. I felt almost inclined to break it off."

"What!" Mr. Foothorape broke out with

genuine wonder, "and kill the goose that lays the golden eggs? It would be as ruinous to break off the engagement as to fulfil it."

"Bell Carteret is not a goose," the girl said. "He has brains, and there is something noble in his character. He isn't like the general run of mean, selfish, contemptible, respectable people. I like him; I should like to marry him if he were rich, and I almost feel as if I intended to break off this engagement. I am weary of wickedness."

"As your father," Mr. Foothorape said, trembling with anger, "I forbid you to take any such step. And you talk of *my* neglecting to follow up an advantage! You have had a fit of the blues during my absence, and you've been making good resolutions. Perhaps you have been converted."

"You are a fool," his daughter returned. "I am tired of being bad, that is all. But

I know I should be more tired of being good, so I shall remain in the course of action which is less fatiguing."

The editior seemed reassured by the last declaration, and said in his ordinary tone,

"Why does he want to push it on?"

"Can't say," returned Miss Foothorape. "He can hardly have got into any scrape with anyone else, for he is not given that way."

Mr. Foothorape laughed, and brought out a cigar.

"I suppose," he said, lighting it, "that you like him because you imagine yourself to be the only one he ever fancied. But from what I picked up at Collington, I should say he has found some one else. He's a queer fellow, if ever there was one. Why should he want to marry you now?" Mr. Foothorape said musingly, and taking the cigar from his mouth.

"Who is she?" Pauline demanded quickly.

"You have heard of her before—Clare Vaughton. I fished it out of a lad they've got at the Lodge, named Marmaduke; he was down at the inn, drinking."

A burning flush had come into Pauline's pale face as he spoke, and had passed away again. She gave no other sign, but said,

"Mr. Bell Carteret shall have his wish, and you had better take the night train, there's a through third class ticket to be had by it, and get down to Collington again, and bleed Irvine. And as it will be the last time, bleed him well."

"*Nous avons changé tout cela*," the editor said, looking up at his daughter, "jealousy is strong in man, but it is stronger in woman."

"That's one of the few sharp things you say now and then," his daughter remarked.

"But I don't see the necessity of the night train, and I don't like the idea," Mr. Foothorape said, leaning back in the chair, and

comfortably smoking. "I suppose you'll want me to give you away. Why can't I go and get the money out of Irvine afterwards?"

"And pray why has Frank Irvine been giving us money from time to time, without Bell's knowledge?" Pauline asked, seating herself on the frayed horsehair couch.

"To bribe you to put off the marriage, of course," returned Mr. Foothorape.

"Well then," his daughter said, "don't you suppose that Bell will write to Frank, his oldest and best friend—and there are not many such friends in the world—the instant he knows for certain he is going to be married. If I left you to yourself, you would get down to Collington a day too late, and instead of doing a really pretty stroke of business, Irvine would very likely detain you while he sent for a policeman. I'll pack your valise at once."

"And I'm fagged to death already!" Mr. Foothorape said very disconsolately, "and there's a 'Guerilla' to be brought out at the beginning of next week."

"I'll send up to Flucker about it," the girl said.

"Are you really going to marry him?" Mr. Foothorape asked, curiously eyeing her.

"I shall have a talk with Harry about it," Miss Foothorape said. "You must be back in any case to give me away."

"To-night is Wednesday, to-morrow Thursday, and when must I be back?"

"The marriage had better take place on Saturday," she said. "And to-night is not Wednesday but this morning is Thursday, and the train starts at 1.30. A.M. You can go to sleep in the carriage. Now change your waistcoat and start. I'll pack your things up in ten minutes."

"A third-class carriage is not the bedroom

to which I looked forward to-night," the editor said. "But I suppose I had better go. It *will* be a neat stroke of business, as you say."

CHAPTER XI.

THE OJIBBEWAYS *v.* THE FLUTE-PLAYERS.

THERE is a railway station within two miles of Collington, which partly makes up for the fact that this "picturesquely situated village," as it is described in the itineraries, has not at present one of its own, for the line upon which Bell Carteret's acquaintance was working is still unopened. At this station Mr. Foothorape got down from a third-class carriage, about ten hours after Pauline had recommended him to enter it. He did not wear the white waistcoat in which we have, ere this, had occasion to admire him. But still, with his portly figure, genial not to say fleshy countenance, and tall

stature, he did not look the man to allow his children to pelt him with chicken bones.

He was by no means the only person who got out that morning at what a sonorous and solitary official proclaimed to be "Foxfield for Collington." The narrow platform was alive even at that early hour. Half a dozen young fellows descended on it in a body from a first-class carriage, and stood laughing and chattering, or looking in the direction where the undulating country rose beyond Collington into blue ranges of folding hills, the Sugar-loaf among them standing out peaked and conspicuous.

These young men resembled each other in wearing ribbons—puce and white—round their straw or "pot" hats—and also in carrying long shallow green bags. And lo! from two other carriages, one first and the other second, there jumped down as the train stopped, and remained as it went on

from the platform, half a dozen more young men. These also carried long green bags, and wore ribbons about their hats. But the colour of their ribbons was entirely mauve, and they, comparatively, scowled at the wearers of the puce and white. The latter, in return, eyed them with a successful affectation of indifference, and with no affectation at all of hauteur.

Mr. Foothorape, meantime, stood impressive, but for his shabby little carpet-bag, between the two parties. Attention was drawn to him from each.

"Suppose," said one of the wearers of the puce and white, "suppose he's the Ojibbeways' umpire, isn't he? He's a heavier swell than any of them."

"As the Tootling Flute-players think such a lot of themselves," said a cricketer who wore his mauve very broad, "they might as well provide their umpire with a decent

carpet-bag. He is their umpire, I suppose? —he looks like one."

It may easily be understood that Mr. Foothorape was not anxious to be observed. Noticing that he was being remarked upon, he withdrew from the platform, and being a little confused, lost himself among a number of trucks on the sidings. He was ignominiously rescued, and reproved by the station-master, who, in spite of the majesty of his appearance, remarked the dingy carpet-bag, and suspected that Mr. Foothorape was looking out for any little trifle that might be handy upon a truck. However, by this time the Tootling Flute-players and the Howling Ojibbeways had taken a sensible turn, and having to some extent fraternised, were well on the road to Collington, where they were about to wage a contest, before mentioned as in prospect. So Mr. Foothorape was well behind them all the way.

"Low sort of work this, Beevor, isn't it?" said one of the most exclusive of the Tootling Flute-players to another, with whom he had dropped behind from the rest. "Tramping two miles along a country road, as if we were a parish eleven."

"Hawtrey ought to have sent a trap," said the other, changing his green bag from the right hand to the left, and trying to stick his eye-glass in his eye. It *would* fall out. "Let us stop by this gate a bit. I wish I'd never joined the Tootling Flute-players. If Hawtrey can't afford to put us up and take care of us, why did he get us to come down here?"

So saying, the speaker put his bag down along the gate—a brass-plated bag, having its owner's name inscribed—"Sir Bayard Beevor."

"I should never have dreamt of you joining a cricket-club at all," his companion

said, offering him a cigar-case. The Baronet took a cigar.

"It was old What's-his-name, my medical man, made me," he explained. "He told me I must take exercise, and that a dawdle up and down the High Street was not enough for a young Oxford man."

Sir Bayard Beevor, it may here be observed, was prosecuting his studies at the University of Oxford, in a manner rather harmless than arduous. Indeed, till his doctor interfered, he had done little but play on the piano and smoke cigarettes during the hours devoted generally by undergraduates to more active or more studious pursuits.

"What did he recommend?" said Sir Bayard's companion, getting on the top of the gate.

The Baronet declined this exertion, and remained leaning against the bars, and twisting the cord of his eye-glass.

"Riding," he replied. "But then, you see, I'm a little liable to fall off, so I turned it over, and arrived at the conclusion that cricket was as gentle exercise as anything."

"Is it?" his companion asked. Though not anxious to contradict a Baronet, he was somewhat taken aback by this statement.

"It is, as I play it," Sir Bayard said, placidly twisting his eye-glass. "I always go in last, and as I never by any chance score, I just get a little exercise and excitement, by walking from the tent to the wicket, and taking guard, and that sort of thing, and walking back again. And I do a little fielding in the slips; not near enough to the wicket to have my teeth knocked out, and not far enough to have to run after the long hits. And now and then a catch comes my way, and I miss it, which also has a tonic effect. But if I'm to walk two miles on a turnpike with this confounded thing—"

Sir Bayard looked lazily down at the green bag—"I must find some other dodge, and cut the Flute-players."

His interlocutor did not say what he thought, that, as far as cricket, pure and simple, was concerned, the sooner Sir Bayard left the club, the better for the honour of their puce and white flag. The majority of his fellow-clubmen would have been equally secretive; for the Tootling Flute-players were, as we have seen, a very select club, and liked to keep a baronet on their roll of playing members. A baronet, to their exclusive minds, though he should never make a run, and always miss a catch, was better, in a match, than many runs and several catches.

"Don't you think it would amuse you to get a score, Beevor?" said his friend, from the top of the gate.

"Nothing would amuse me that made me

hot and uncomfortable," the Baronet said. "I think I might play very well if I put my back into it, and spent money on professional bowlers. Still, there's one little drawback—confound the eyeglass, I'll never have one except with a tortoishell rim again. It's always tumbling out."

"Oh! you'd play well enough with practice," the other said, getting down from his perch.

"Daresay I should," said the Baronet; "only there's one little drawback, I think. I've never yet been able to see the ball."

"Then on what principle do you play it?"

"I scoop at it with my bat, wildly, when I think it's time it was near me."

"Here's that big fellow coming up we thought was their umpire," Sir Bayard's friend said.

Mr. Foothorape had by this time reached the two lingerers.

"We shall have to walk with him if we don't get along. It seems to be expected about these parts. Shall I carry your bag?"

Sir Bayard, however, had self-respect enough to decline this offer, and with much ado carried it himself, with many changes betwixt his hands, for the rest of the way.

Arriving at the cricket-ground, the Tootling Flute-players, as well as his own party, were received, both grandly and warmly, by Captain Pigot. Somehow or other, Captain Pigot, so to speak, covered the cricket-ground, though it was an eight acre piece. For being on the ground, in whatever part of it, you were conscious of the gallant captain. His large whiskers seemed ever near you, and in truth the tented arena might have had a less agreeable tutelar genius. For the captain was an enthusiast

not only about cricket, but also about cricketers. If you played a good innings he was lost in loud admiration, and extolled it publicly as one of the finest he had ever seen. He went about among the tents expatiating to people on its merits. Perhaps he talked of it at the next match he played, when probably somebody else hit up a score that superseded yours in his praises, to be superseded in its turn.

Nor did the martial Pigot confine his bursts of admiration to his own eleven. If a batsman on the opposite side made a good hit, he was sure to hear from "point," the position Captain Pigot took in the field (and took well), a tribute of praise. "Splendidly cut, sir!" or, "Well hit, well hit, indeed, to leg, sir!" And while you were rushing between wickets, you heard the Captain making further loud comments to the other fielders, such as—"'Pon my word, Caffyn never cut

a ball cleaner!" or, "Rasper, and no mistake! George Parr over again!"

It is true that, according to the Captain, an impossible number of George Parrs and Caffyns were by this time blushing unseen in the vicinity of Collington; but his excellent intentions, as well as his compliments, made up for exaggeration, which was honest, at least, at the time; and he was very popular among the cricketers of Collington and its neighbourhood. He was, indeed, popular with all the genteel inhabitants of a district remarkably hard to please. He was not exactly neutral ground on which everybody met, but he "met" everybody—in brief, he was regarded by Mrs. Villeroy as a hero of romance, and by most other people as a pleasant, gentlemanly man of a good stamp. Fortunate, in truth, is the man, socially, who is big, who has large whiskers, and not more than average brains, and who takes a

sincere interest in the weather. Far more than a disagreeable genius is he admired and respected. The reason of all this is pretty patent. Man is gregarious. We like people chiefly for their negative qualities, because it is not, as we fondly imagine, a man's excellence which attracts us, but his existence. We like our friends to show a superiority over other people, but object to their having one over ourselves. Now, while the whiskers of Captain Pigot struck the world with awe, his conversation with his intimates did not produce this impression. Those men always get on best who are admired when little known; but when well known are not heroes to us even who are not their *valets de chambre.*

It was the fashion of the Collington gentlefolks to attend the cricket-matches. The young ladies of the neighbourhood did not perhaps care as much as Captain Pigot did

for cricket, but they shared his interest in cricketers. And the respective families had an opportunity presented to them of glaring at each other during the whole of an afternoon, which was not to be missed. In phaetons, or on horseback, or on benches ranged carelessly about the ground, were the Snooksley Hawtreys, the Copes (of Marl Villa), the Thrings, the Johnsons, the Jacksons, each detachment quizzing the apparel and demeanour of the set which, somehow or other, was recognised in Collington as being immediately below it. Honoria and Millicent Hawtrey were of course there, in a pony phaeton, to survey their brother's prowess, and to encourage generally, with the smiles of beauty, the Tootling Flute-players. Their brother was sulky. When his side were in—represented just now at the wickets by the Reverend — Smythe, curate of Hawkstone, and young Schnad-

hurst (whose father made a fortune in parasols, and is an M.P.)—at this period of the game the captain of the Flute-players appeared in his pads by the side of his sister's carriage, grumbling.

"The Baronet's come down after all," he said. "We ought to have put the eleven up last night at our place. I wonder where the governor expects to go to? He'll never get you girls off. Just button this glove, Milly. Wonder if it's worth while my introducing Sir Bayard to you. But girls always look best in an evening; and they've more opportunity then. Squinting at him across a pair of white reins isn't of much use."

"I don't see," said Honoria, herself rather vexed secretly at her father's want of dash in speculation—"I don't see that we shall have a chance of even so much as squinting at your Baronet. That impudent Mrs. Villeroy has got hold of him already."

"Let her keep him!" said Millicent.

"By Jove! the parson's out, caught—I'm next man," said Snooksley, and started for the wickets.

To speak the truth, Mrs. Villeroy was unjustly accused in this instance of pushing for the Baronet. For one thing, she felt a little off duty just now, and having secured Frank Irvine, was resting on her oars. Moreover, her mind was occupied at present with a not unjustifiable pride in the prowess of her son Baker, who had just played for his side a long and tremendously hard hit innings, against some very fair bowling on the part of the Tootling Flute-players.

But Sir Bayard, being only interested in cricket from a sanitary point of view, was, of course, open to be interested in other things. He had performed his duties in the field, that is, he had missed two catches, and had thrice allowed the ball to slip disgrace-

fully between his legs. As he lounged about after rendering these valuable services, he espied Luciana Mary, who sat—a very pleasing decoration of the scene—on a bench with the Villeroy party. Having looked at her, while his eyeglass dropped down upon his Jersey no less than sixteen times, he commended her charms to Captain Pigot; and requested that officer to introduce him, which the Captain readily did, and also to Clare and Mrs. Villeroy. Clare was no more interested in her introduction than was the Baronet. She was not, indeed, looking as if she enjoyed the spectacle by any means. The sadness of her eyes, generally unobserved by reason of her quick movements and replies, and the health which was vivid on her countenance, was now the leading feature of it. She had generally a tendency to amuse herself with the practice of a little *persiflage* on Captain Pigot,

tempted perhaps by the fact that that gallant officer was not profound, and so, like the famous Mrs. Slipslop, not very clear as to the meaning of irony.

But now she was pale and silent. Captain Pigot noted it; he noted her moods more than those of others, from feelings already made known to the reader. And, to do him justice, the good fellow would have preferred being made uneasy by her light satire, to seeing her as he did now, sad from some cause unknown to him, and uninterested.

Mrs. Villeroy was as warm in her reception of the Baronet as Clare was indifferent, and her flounces made eager room for him when, after some little conversation, he sat down betwixt her and Luciana Mary, coolly, after his manner. As for the engaged Luciana Mary, Frank Irvine was not by her,

from a cause that will presently appear, and she lifted the long lashes from over the brown pleading eyes, and took an interest in the Baronet. The Baronet was languidly pleased. Luciana Mary's face reminded him of a pretty one in a French print he had in his rooms at Oxford. He did not dislike to have Oxford recalled to him, since his studies, as has before been stated, were rather elegant than arduous. So, having once settled himself by the side of Luciana Mary, he did not rise again till Snooksley Hawtrey appeared before him. Bowing formally to Mrs. Villeroy, this young gentleman apologised for his intrusion, but informed the Baronet that all the Tootling Flute-players save two had now had their innings. Would Sir Bayard put on his pads? Mrs. Villeroy thereupon supposed regretfully that Sir Bayard was leaving them. Charmed with Luciana Mary, Sir Bayard

answered that, as a matter of form, he supposed he must take his bat to the wickets and back again.

"Is the fellow at the other end likely to make any runs, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Hawtrey," said Snooksley, with hardly-suppressed fury.

Mrs. Villeroy was equally put to it to disguise a chuckle of delight. Here was this baronet chatting affably with herself, flirting with Luciana Mary, and forgetting the very name of these conceited Hawtreys, who wished it to appear that they had brought him down into the country, a token of their own superiority.

"I hope he won't," the Baronet said, rising. "That running and turning round at the end of the distance is worse than most things, I know. I'll be back soon, Mrs. Villeroy, if you won't mind the trouble of keeping my seat."

Mrs. Villeroy ecstatically beamed in answer. Here was a triumph indeed!

"Uncommonly pretty Miss Villeroy is!" the Baronet said, walking with Snooksley towards the dressing tent. "Who are those plain girls in the phaeton yonder?" and, with these words, he put up his eye-glass, and looked at Honoria and Millicent.

"Those are my sisters," Snooksley said shortly.

The Baronet after this walked on by his companion's side in silence, but more quickly than his wont. He was hardly padded and gloved when his turn came to bat.

"Sweltering day, Sir Bayard," Captain Pigot said at point, as the Baronet passed by him to the wicket—"hot work running."

The new-comer smiled apprehensively in answer to this remark, and took guard. There was a brief pause. The bowler

bowled. The Baronet scooped wildly at the first ball.

"If a sixpence had been on the bails," commented Captain Pigot from his place in the field, "that ball would have lifted it off."

The Baronet scooped at the second ball and missed it with his bat, but not with his leg, which was caught just above the pad. Captain Pigot, at point, laughed at the contusion. The third ball came. At this, also, his eye-glass falling out of his eye, Sir Bayard frantically scooped, knowing where the ball was neither before he hit at it nor afterwards.

"Splendidly hit!" shouted Captain Pigot at point. "Never saw Caffyn cut a ball better."

"Run it out!" resounded from the circle of spectators, and from the tent over which floated a puce and white flag with the ini-

tials T. F. P., and the representation of a flute. And the hapless Baronet found himself swiftly rushing between the wickets, his bruised knee causing him acute agony. He was for stopping when he had run twice.

"Go on again!" roared everybody except the Ojibbeways. And the Baronet, under the pressure of public opinion, went on again. His bat was already on the popping-crease, when he felt a horrible sensation in the small of the back. The ball, thrown up from an immense distance by Baker Villeroy, had hit the hitter. The latter stopped, and groaning with anguish, threw himself down on the ground.

"Go on again!" roared the Tootling Flute-players—"overthrow!—go on again!"

"Shy her up!" bawled the Howling Ojibbeways, in the wake of the fieldsman who was rushing after the ball, thrown up too far by the excessive prowess of their captain.

Mrs. Villeroy waved her parasol with enthusiasm. Honoria and Millicent had hard work to keep their ponies quiet in the phaeton during the uproar.

"Go on again!—overthrow!" shouted all the spectators.

Poor Sir Bayard rose from his recumbent position, and tried to comply with the universally-expressed wish. But running a fiver with a hurt knee is no light matter even to an athletic man, and Sir Bayard was not an athlete. He staggered rather than ran across the space between wickets, but so slowly that, before his bat was grounded, the ball had been thrown back again from the other side, and the wicket-keeper had improved the occasion. Sir Bayard was "run out."

CHAPTER XII.

MR. FOOTHORAPE DISTINGUISHES HIMSELF AS A MAN OF BUSINESS.

MRS. VILLEROY about this time carried her head high. She had seen no more ghosts, and the exciting matters which followed the mysterious reappearance to her of William Villeroy, had helped her to get rid of the unpleasant feeling which, nevertheless, she could not entirely shake off. It haunted her a little; it marred, somewhat, her triumph, as the skeleton may have now and then damped the feastings of the Scythians. I think that this fact went far to confirm the theory that Mrs. Villeroy had really seen William Vil-

leroy or his apparition on the night of the return from the Sugarloaf. When a matter is doubtful, and yet we have an instinct that it is certain—an instinct that is quite independent of testimony or proof of any kind—our instinct is usually right. Mrs. Villeroy had an instinct of this kind. I opine that, if she had been without one—if she had known inwardly that the thing she had seen was a mere product of imagination—a figment, in short—she would have talked about the affair much more than she did. She would have asked for sympathy and interest, and would have been for some time an invalid. She, being the woman she was, would have felt the distinction of having seen a ghost. She would have aired the distinction, and the Villeroy family would have never heard the last of it. She would, in short, have made the most of the matter. But on this occasion she acted in a

manner quite contrary, and made the least of it. She was even remarkably reticent on the subject, banishing it from her mind and from other people's ears as much as possible.

The letters in which Mrs. Villeroy announced to relatives and friends her daughter's engagement to Mr. Irvine of Dacres Hall were beautiful to read. They professed as much virtue as do the writings of Rousseau. In fact, this scheming and weak, though not unkindly lady, had a happy knack of imposing on other people as well as on herself. Even Frank Irvine—an amiable young man, certainly, but a clever one—was taken in by her. Her virtue was not of the severe type; she professed charity as well as morality.

"Your mother is an excellent woman," Frank said one day, with some warmth, as he was walking on the verandah with Luciana.

It was one of the foolish things which everyone now and then says. I suppose that Shakespeare once or twice in his life made a palpably weak remark. Even Luciana Mary thought the observation foolish.

"Please get that least watering-pot filled," she said. "The petunias must be watered; they are mamma's, but she is too idle to see after them."

"Why doesn't Marmaduke?" Frank asked, stooping for the watering-pot.

"Marmaduke has plenty to do besides, and does it beautifully," said Luciana Mary. "There, you need not stop to fix the rose on. I will water them without it."

Thus had gone matters at the Lodge up to the morning of the cricket-match. Assiduous as Frank Irvine was in his attendance upon Luciana Mary, it has been noted that he left her by herself on the cricket-ground, a proceeding to which Luciana

Mary was more indifferent than was her mother. The fact is that Luciana Mary had accepted Frank in the way of business, and she liked to be rid of him now and then. All work and no play, she felt, made Gill a dull girl. Not that she derived no satisfaction from the assiduities of Frank. She could have brought herself to acquiesce in a much more ill-favoured suitor; for Luciana Mary was not hard to please in respect to young gentlemen. Nevertheless, Frank was unfortunate enough to possess an intellect, and this circumstance made his little *fiancée* uncomfortable. She felt that she should never be quite at home with him.

Well, are there not couples in this world who are in parallel case with Mr. and Mrs John Anderson, and still do not thoroughly know each other? The thought is not my own. Any young lady who reads these pages may recollect it in Lord Houghton's

pretty song, called "Strangers Yet."

Luciana Mary had not many accomplishments, but she played and sang a little, owning a middling voice, not overstrong, and after six years of instruction, she had got twice as many accompaniments at her fingers' ends. "Strangers Yet" was one of them; and one evening, in the days of her engagement to Frank, she sang this ballad at Villeroy Lodge, but interpreted it, as the musical cant is, without feeling.

Mrs. Villeroy—to return to the cricket-field—was displeased at Frank's departure just at the very time when she wanted, above all things, to exhibit him to her many enemies upon the tented plain. This vigilant matron, therefore, watched the circumstances of that departure narrowly. She saw a small, rather ragged little lad come up to him just after they had entered the field, and were settling on the bench, and draw him

apart. However, he made excuses to Luciana, which that young lady received in a tolerant manner, and then he returned to the entrance gate. Mrs. Villeroy watched him to it, and up the road. She saw him in the distance, to her wonderment, stopping before a public-house, the smallest and least respectable of the village. She watched him enter it.

If she could have seen his further proceedings, she would have noted that he made an inquiry at the bar, and was thence shown into a small parlour; not over-well furnished, but adorned with several gimcracky pictures, a stuffed land-rail, and some crockery of doubtful ware, arranged conspicuously on a high black mantelpiece. The little room was already occupied by a portly but shabby gentleman, who, when Frank entered, was shredding a lemon, in connection with whiskey. This gentleman

was Mr. Foothorape. He rose, graciously extending his hand to Frank, and addressed him with his wonted eloquence.

"A fine morning, sir, and a magnificent country. I crave your pardon for withdrawing you from the tented plain, and from the galaxy of beauty assembled to behold your prowess."

Frank remarked that he was not one of the players.

"Indeed, sir!" said the flowery editor. "And yet you are young. In youth I myself hurled, not unsuccessfully, the treble-seamed ball. But you are anxious to return?"

"Yes," Frank said.

"Then I will state with all conciseness why I sent the message which has carried its purpose, and given me the pleasure, the ecstasy, I may say, of your company."

"You had better keep your rhetoric for persons who believe in that sort of thing,

and who don't know you as I do," Frank said. "Tell me as quickly as you can what it is you want?"

"Surely you can guess?"

"More money, I suppose?" said Frank, contemptuously. "I wish you would not come to me for it while I am here. It is important that I should not be seen in questionable company in these parts."

"My only son—my prodigal son, I may say—has just returned from America, and I am put to great expense," Mr. Foothorape said, pathetically. "He wants money to go back again."

"I am tired of your extortions," Frank said.

"My dear sir," Mr. Foothorape returned, squeezing the lemon over his glass by way of an accidental metaphor, "I am sure you would prefer that your friend Mr. Carteret's marriage should again be postponed by the

young lady at whose option it is to name the day."

"You know perfectly well," Frank said, with a flush on his face, and taking his arm off the chimney-piece where he had been leaning it, "that you and your daughter have not, legally speaking, a leg to stand upon. My friend's bitterly-regretted promise, made in his early youth, was a mere verbal one, and I have told him that even in the eyes of men of honour it would be questionable whether he need keep it. It was a hasty promise, only given once; and, in my opinion, at least," Frank said, hesitating, "in the opinion of some, and certainly in the eye of the law, there must be some appearance of deliberation, or a promise, where the undertaking is so important, ought not to be binding."

"A promise is a promise," Mr. Foothorape observed, regarding Frank with evident anxiety over his whiskey.

"I am not addressing you as a theoretical moralist," Frank said, with the curl of contempt on his somewhat fine lips, "but as an adventurer."

"Does Mr. Bell Carteret intend to break his word?" the other asked, clearly uneasy at Frank's tone, and pausing before he spoke for a gulp at his whiskey.

"No," Frank returned. "He is as Quixotic—as strictly honourable as ever. And I know that if I were to acquaint him with the fact that the reason of your daughter's putting him off is the excellent one that I pay her and you from time to time to do it, he would offer to fulfil his engagement to-morrow. and she would accept his proposal. Therefore, weary, and somewhat ashamed, somehow, as I am of the business, I will draw you another cheque."

"My dear Mr. Irvine," exclaimed Mr. Foothorape, an expression of delight suc-

ceeding one of anxiety which had hitherto possessed his broad bibulous-looking countenance. "My dear Mr. Irvine!" and the warmth of Mr. Foothorape's tones for once was genuine, "you are a gentleman, liberal, and of the right sort, though a little rude, sometimes, in your remarks." And the speaker rose and moved towards the hearth-rug. "You will take a glass of whiskey with me?" he said insinuatingly, with his hand on the bellrope.

"Ring, if you like," Frank returned. "But for writing materials, not for whiskey. I'll write the cheque and have done with it. And the longer it is before I see you again, the better."

"I trust," said Mr. Foothorape, ringing, and unable, from a cause better known to the reader than to Frank, to repress a chuckle, "I trust that when my son has returned to America, I shall not again be

compelled to give you an opportunity of exhibiting the disinterestedness of true friendship."

Frank said nothing, till the writing materials were brought, and he sat down for the first time.

"I haven't my cheque-book," he then observed. "Will a rough cheque do?"

"Perfectly well," Mr. Foothorape said, with dignity, as he straddled contentedly before the fireplace with his thumbs in their usual position. "Anything that is signed will be honoured by my bankers if presented by me."

So Frank Irvine wrote and signed the cheque, which was, as he said, for a considerable sum.

"And now," he said coldly, "I will leave you, I only hope, permanently.

"*Good* morning, sir," Mr. Foothorape said suavely. "May you wield the wil-

low, sir, for sixty consecutive minutes!"

"I don't wield it at all," said Frank, "as I told you."

"Then," said Mr. Foothorape, straddling rather more widely on the hearthrug, and digging his thumbs more deeply beneath his waistcoat, while he spoke with an easy geniality, which Frank's coolness did not perturb, "may you bask, sir, in the smiles of observant beauty!"

Frank Irvine was gone, and Mr. Foothorape, left to himself, sang a couple of bars or so of a fashionable tune, executed the polka mazurka step on the hearthrug, and gave other signs of mirth which, despite Fielding's remark to the contrary effect, resides in full rather than in empty pockets. Still cheerful and keeping it up, he remained in this posture for the subsequent hour, and drank four more glasses of whiskey. He did not visit the cricket-field, however, but

went down again to the station. The road ran straight from Collington to the Foxfield station, and Mr. Foothorape found it. But I regret to have to state that the course of so excellent a man was, on this occasion, often curvilinear.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MATCH DOES AND DOES NOT PROCEED.

ENTERING the cricket-field, as he retraced his steps, Frank Irvine paused a moment. The scene, indeed, was one which might have drawn less appreciative eyes than his. In the foreground, the white and coloured dresses of the cricketers moved and shone. The spectators, who had grown numerous in the course of the afternoon, had fallen into groups, that improved the picture, especially where their quiet interest and movings to and fro were covered by the stately repose of some great elms that rose on the farther skirt of the field. Beyond, quieter even than these elms, whose

foliage stirred and trembled somewhat in a light breeze—beyond, rose the calm summer hills, blue as the sky. Frank's eyes went on to them, and his imagination carried him to their slanting fern-forests, and seldom-footed glens in which no sound was except the music of runlets; and thus dreaming for a moment, after his manner, the voices of the cricketers failed upon his ear. He would have rested his arms on the turn-stile for an hour, and have mused happily enough, had such a juncture presented itself before his first arrival at Collington. As it was, he stopped two minutes, and then passed on into the field, looking round for the Villeroys.

"This is a lovely precinct," he said to himself, "of this quiet western village. There is no war here, nor rumour of war, in this peaceful nook of happy England. How calm those distant hills are! Distant blue

hills always seem to me too calm to be real—rather, they are like a dream—as tranquil a dream as St. Cecily's."

And thus meditating, Frank walked on; but looking round for the Villeroys, he soon began to smile at himself, noticing how the peace of the neighbourhood was not re-produced in the breasts of its inhabitants—how there was war in Arcadia.

There were some of the Hawtreys close by him, trying to look at him, the unoffending Frank, with scornful unconcern; from beyond them the peering glances of the Johnsons swept the ring of spectators; further still the animation of the Jacksons indicated that they were pulling their neighbours to pieces; and making for where he at last saw his own party, Frank passed Millicent and Honoria's phaeton, and heard the latter say, "That cannot be Mr. What's-his-name, with whom that underbred little Luciana is flirting, can it, Milly?"

"Hush! hush!" said Milly, conscious, which Honoria, to do her justice, was not, of the nearness of Mr. What's-his-name.

Frank walked on much quicker, a jealous anger attacking him at once. He had seen the Baronet in the distance, but had mistaken him for Baker. After his innings (on which Mrs. Villeroy was complimentary), Sir Bayard had returned to his old seat by Luciana Mary. Seeing Frank approach, he, as he naturally had no idea of the present position of affairs betwixt Frank and Miss Villeroy, made no movement, but kept his place. Frank's face was flushed slightly, but he sat down on the other side of Mrs. Villeroy—there being no other place—without further sign.

A good deal of confusion now became apparent. Mrs. Villeroy asked Frank where he had been, and Frank was embarrassed in his reply. His intending mother-in-law

also talked somewhat at random, for she saw with the eye of an expert that the Baronet's ignorance and Frank's indignation might lead to a crisis, and it behoved her to consider whether it was worth while to run any risk of losing the Squire, on the chance of winning the Baronet. Hurriedly, she decided it was not. In the meantime she introduced them, timing the introduction to the moment when one of the opposition families, which was leaving the ground, passed by.

"Mr. Frank Irvine—Sir Bayard Beevor," said Mrs. Villeroy, quite as loudly as was necessary.

The opposition family was collectively crushed. Frank Irvine bowed, and, as might be expected, rather coolly; the Baronet returned the salute with all the insolence of a nonchalant undergraduate.

Meantime, as I have said, Mrs. Villeroy

rapidly ran over things in her mind. But Frank's recommendations were weighty. He had a fair estate, and had behaved unexceptionably in the matter of settlements; he was of good family, clever, rather good-looking, and respectable; altogether as desirable a bird as you could have in the hand. Perhaps the Baronet was not any richer, it might be even not so rich, he did not appear to be as clever, or as good-looking even, as the Squire of Dacres; he might not be respectable, though—the thought flashed across Mrs. Villeroy extenuatingly—young men will be young men! He was decidedly a bird in the bush, and Mrs. Villeroy, from some past experiences, knew that, in reference to her daughter, a bird in the hand was worth much more than two birds in the bush.

"No," Mrs. Villeroy said to herself, summing hastily up, "matters must stand as they are. It would be in the highest degree

worldly to throw poor Mr. Irvine over now. Still, there is the duty of hospitality to be considered."

"Sir Bayard," she said, graciously, "I understand from my son, dear Baker, that the game will go on to-morrow. If you have no better engagement, we shall be delighted to take you in for the night at Villeroy Lodge. I am sorry Mr. Villeroy is not at home. He does not often join our village festivites, even when he is with us, as his mind is entirely concentrated upon scientific progress. Clare dear, how can I exactly define the favourite pursuits of Mr. Villeroy?"

"You can say that they are those of experimental philosophy," Clare said, stopping an explanation of the game which she was giving to the infant Frederick. This young gentleman had been brought to the ground and consigned to Clare by his nurse at his

own instance. Clad in a spangled tunic, and a blue and black turban, he presented a somewhat striking appearance, and for a time watched the game with astonishment.

"I shall be delighted," the Baronet answered. "Of course, What's-his-name, the brother of those two plain girls, ought to have put our eleven up, and have given us a dance to-night. But he isn't likely to do anything for me, particularly after I put my foot in it about his sisters."

"Some people admire Millicent Hawtrey," Luciana Mary said demurely. "But what mistake did you make?"

The Baronet related the circumstances, not suppressing the compliment he had paid to Luciana. The latter looked genuinely pleased. An exactly opposite emotion, however, was displayed by Frank Irvine. He started up, and rather hotly was accosting the Baronet, when Mrs. Villeroy, acting on

her previously-formed determination, stopped him.

"I do not like to hear my daughter so broadly complimented by a gentleman she has known so short a time, Sir Bayard," she said, with a slightly stiff accent.

"I beg your pardon," the young man replied. "It *was* rather cool. But I think it's time I took a little gentle exercise. I see our men are going out into the field again." And he rose.

"Shall we send down for any portmanteau you may have?" Mrs. Villeroy asked.

"Thank you—I shall be infinitely obliged if you will," Sir Bayard replied, with sincerity. He recollected with horror his matutinal sufferings caused by the long green bag.

"Then we will start, Luciana Mary and Clare, dears," Mrs. Villeroy said. "We dine

at seven, Sir Bayard. I am sorry we cannot give you a dance on so short a notice."

"I daresay I shall have had exercise enough for to-day," he returned. "But Hawtrey ought to have got one up." And lifting his hat, the Baronet sauntered off into the space between the flags.

He was rather hard on Snooksley Hawtrey in his demand of a dance, for it was next to impossible to get up anything of the kind near Collington, as all the neighbouring families, from the grave causes before stated, were chiefly employed, to speak metaphorically, in biting their thumbs at one another.

Sir Bayard duly partook of the family dinner at Villeroy Lodge, and was quite as well entertained as he could reasonably expect. The repast was a protracted one, in consequence chiefly of the enormous appetite which the day's exertion had given to

Baker Villeroy; and still unaware of the relations existing between Luciana Mary and Frank, the Baronet paid the former much attention—in fact, Mrs. Villeroy's line of conduct was, accidentally (for she was not deep enough for abstruse tactics, though study and love of the subject had done much for her), the most politic she could have adopted. For the slight rebuff she had given the Baronet on the cricket-field prevented him from thinking that he, the much-coveted fish, Sir Bayard Beevor, was being angled for by Mrs. Villeroy with the tempting bait, Luciana Mary. He was piqued, and therefore the more interested. Frank naturally sat by the young lady at dinner; but the Baronet began to talk to her, nevertheless, across the table. Frank was angry, and tried to ignore him as much as was consistent with good behaviour. And Clare, seeing the exigency, and happening to be

seated next to this unconscious Oxonian, good-naturedly created a diversion, and, at the risk of being thought piscatorial, began to talk to him herself.

Undergraduates are volatile creatures; so Sir Bayard passed on from one pretty girl to another pretty girl, like a butterfly from one flower to another, and was not ill-content. He liked flirting with Luciana Mary; but he did not dislike talking to Clare. Nevertheless, the latter young lady was, perhaps, too deep for him, or too hard upon him, for when they were all in the drawing-room, the Baronet *would* try to supplant Frank as turner of Luciana Mary's music. Frank was much more fitted to the task, knowing Luciana Mary's songs pretty well by this time. However, she sung her very best that evening, and yet did not wake Baker Villeroy, who, as usual, slept, unelegantly snoring, from time to time, on an ottoman.

Of course, the more Frank claimed his rights in reference to the pianist, the more the unconscious Baronet, in the spirit of rivalry, endeavoured to cut him out. In the course of the evening, however, it occurred to Sir Bayard to ask the warrior Pigot (whom the Villeroys had procured to meet him at the last moment) who Frank was. The Captain told him of the engagement.

"Put my foot in it again!" thought the Baronet.

"Pretty girl, Miss Villeroy, like a peach," he said to Pigot. "Her cousin's good-looking too, and clever, I should say. Now, which do you go in for?"

"Whichever you please, so as not to cut you out," said the Captain, with unwonted brilliancy of retort.

"Came out of that rather well," he said to himself; and the difficulty, as is often the

case, had sharpened him for the moment. The Baronet now not injudiciously left off his rivalry with Frank, and got along pretty well for the rest of the evening with the affable and genial Pigot. Nevertheless, he spent five and twenty minutes in taking off his dress-boots—though elastic-sided—in his bed-room, and all the while meditated on the subject of Luciana Mary. It was some time, too, before he went to sleep. He lay reflecting still on the peach-like bloom, the perfect little face, and the brown eyes. But he had slept, nevertheless, beyond midnight, when he awoke suddenly. What was ringing in his ears? He was trying to find out, when its remembered cadence rose again. A shriek loud and long. He could tell the direction from which it came, and if he had known the house he would have been assured that it was uttered in the room of Mr. and Mrs. Villeroy.

CHAPTER XIV.

A TEA-PARTY.

THE better a man is the more easily he is provoked. For, being strict with himself, he consistently sees the shortcomings of others in a stronger light than does the unprincipled man, and is annoyed by a multitude of small offences, which to the latter are actually invisible. This, in part, is the cause of the quarrelsomeness we see in respectable people, and had had its effect in producing the civil wars of Collington. I have hitherto touched chiefly on the weaker points of the inhabitants of this pretty and remote western village and its neighbourhood. But I by no means would be under-

stood to pass on them a wholesale condemnation.

No writers are, in reality, so severe upon human nature as those whose cue it seems to be lax, and to attack the reformers of human nature and their disciples who have submitted to systems of reformation. Once attempt to reduce the theories of the former to practice, and you will see that the strictest and least indulgent authors are the Bohemian school, which throws vitriol on respectability. Let a mother be anxious to marry off her daughter, she is branded as the meanest and most mercenary of her sex. Let a man who goes regularly to church have occasion to rub his eyes during the sermon, he is held up to scorn as a hypocrite. If the Bohemians mean anything, they mean that the weakness of human nature is inexcusable. They require in the persons they attack all the effort there has been and

must be to reach even the respectable (I do not mean the pharisaical) water-mark. They peer about for spots in the sun. There are spots undoubtedly; to the announcement of the discovery of them I do not object, but what I do object to is the inference that because the spots exist the sun does not. It is true that your Bohemian writer does not demand asceticism from everybody. From his favourites he asks as little as did Macaulay's easy-going Jesuits from their penitents. Good looks, or a stature over six feet, or an artistic temperament, cover the multitude of sins. But does it not seem rather unreasonable to make respectability deadlier than the seven deadly sins?

Because, then, the inhabitants of Collington got on badly together, because a cloud of small spite and jealousy hung over the fair rural region, and seemed somewhat to darken its calm summer heaven, I am

not going to denounce these country-folks as villains of the deepest dye, or even as mean and contemptible people. My pen shall do no such work. They had their virtues, and were genial enough till hospitality or kindness would compromise, as they thought, their social position. To honour that absurd and despicable Moloch they tormented their neighbours, and their sons and daughters, if necessary.

The position of affairs just now at Villeroy Lodge excited Collington, and was a windfall in a place where life tended generally to the monotonous. Consequently a tea-party given by the doctor's wife a few days after the cricket-match was very interesting. The doctor's family had originally been in the third best set in the place, but the third best set, sacrificing dignity to the social pleasures, had, after a good deal of misgiving, amalgamated with the fourth.

The amalgamation, like that of the Normans and Saxons in the early centuries of England, had been a work of time, but was now complete. Consequently Mrs. Thring, the doctor's wife, had a full tea-table that evening; and amongst the various topics discussed at it, the most attractive was Frank Irvine's affairs.

"Have you heard anything more about what's going on down there, Mrs. Haggernony?" Mrs. Thring asked, turning the spout of the teapot in the direction of the Lodge. "Mrs. Chadwick, might I trouble you for the kettle? Mrs. Cope, try the strawberry jam."

"I dinna think onybody kens muckle aboot it," said Mrs. Haggernony. Mrs. Haggernony was of Scotch extraction, and took snuff. She was the one especial member of the fourth set at whom the third set had chiefly stuck. "These pikelets, as ye

ca' 'em," resumed Mrs. Haggernony, "is just beautiful, Mistress Cope." (Mrs. Cope was the most exclusive member of the third set, and had, indeed, aspired to the second.) "Mistress Cope of the Marlpit," (Marl Villa was the address printed, in blue type, with a monogram on Mrs. Cope's note-paper), "Mistress Cope of the Marlpit, ye're taking no pikelets at all."

"Thank you, Mrs. Haggernony," curtly answered Mrs. Cope, hearing her residence described in a manner she had wished to make obsolete. "I dare say I can take care of myself."

"Dinna fash, Mrs. Cope of the Marlpit, dinna fash," Mrs. Haggernony exclaimed, in a rage. "The Haggernonies are as gude bluid as the Copes. There was a Cope that ran awa'. Furby he was nae relation o' yours, for he was a baronet like that cockerel doon at the Lodge."

So saying, Mrs. Haggernony took snuff and spilt some.

"Don't take any notice, Mrs. Cope," said a gentleman in a low tone, who sat next that lady. He was Mr. Chadwick the curate, who had just refilled Mrs. Thring's kettle for her. "She's very irritable. Takes too much snuff for the nerves. Mrs. Haggernony, may I try your snuff?"

"Deed then, laddie, ye may," said the old lady, handing it down the table. The curate partook, with the satisfaction of a peacemaker, but the anguish of a novice. By sneezing four times, he amused and appeased Mrs. Haggernony. Mrs. Cope remained perfectly unmoved, a fact not so much to her credit as might appear; for what was usually a disadvantage in Mrs. Haggernony's conversation was now an advantage, namely, that her accent prevented the Southrons, among whom she

dwelt, from catching more than one word in every ten she uttered. Mrs. Cope had, fortunately, not caught her drift as well as had the curate.

"There are all sorts of rumours afloat, Mrs. Thring," said Mrs. Coulson, a land-agent's wife. "I heard an absurd one this morning, that Sir Bayard Beevor and Mr. Irvine fought a duel last night, with the poker and tongs."

"Very unfair," Mr. Chadwick said.

"And Marmaduke separated them," Mrs. Coulson continued.

"Very unlikely," said a shrewd-looking old lady who was sitting by Mrs. Thring. There was a general giggle at this, as over a joke of which the charm was its half concealment. The doctor who was a prudent man, and attended the Villeroy family, winked at his wife to stop the subject. But the subject required a good deal of stopping.

"It is time Captain Pigot dropped in," Mrs. Thring said, looking at her watch. The diversion was not well chosen.

"Captain Pigot will bring news, perhaps," Mrs. Coulson said. "And he will let us know what it was frightened Mrs. Villeroy. Is she really ill, doctor?"

"She is subject to slight nervous attacks," Mrs. Thring said.

"Try that Swiss roll, Mrs. Coulson," said Mrs. Thring. "It's very light."

"There's Bob Pigot, silly fellow, in his knickerbockers," said the shrewd-looking old lady, who had been looking out into the street; and presently the street-door bell rang.

"Hech! but Captain Pigot wad mak' a braw Hielandman, wi' his legs naked," Mrs. Haggernony said.

"Oh! that woman!" muttered Mrs. Cope.

This last remark of the Scotch lady was more articulate than usual.

"Shocking!" said the land-agent's wife, slicing the Swiss roll.

"He doesn't make a good Volunteer captain with his legs in knickerbockers," the shrewd old lady said—"at least, so I'm told. I've no more opinion of Bob Pigot's soldiering than I have of his farming."

But at this moment the Captain entered, clad in his rifleman's uniform. He had a habit of choosing this rather incongruous attire for the peaceful tea-parties of Collington.

The shrewd-looking old lady was the only one of her sex in Collington who cared to disparage Captain Pigot. The married ladies of Collington liked, the unmarried ones adored that warrior. His manly and magnificent presence, enhanced by his enviable whiskers, his affable conversation, and the real amiability of his character, always made them intent on his words, like so many

Didos upon those of Æneas. Now more than ever they were eager to hear him; but he, usually so fluent upon Collington gossip, tantalized to-day the curious fair. He talked of the cricket-match, and expressed his exultation at the defeat which, after a severe contest, the Tootling Flute-players had in the end sustained. He went so far as to wonder that the Snooksley Hawtreys had not kept open house during the two days of the cricket-match. He complimented Mr. Chadwick on his last sermon. Like that ecclesiastic, he successfully supplicated Mrs. Haggernony for a pinch of her rappee. He addressed a polite remark to Mrs. Cope, of Marl Villa. But still he kept off from the point to which every one was eager he should come.

"He wants a drap whusky," said Mrs. Haggernony; "aiblins he'd haud a crack wi' us then."

"I'll get it out of him," said the land-agent's lady, to whom this suggestion was offered.

"Captain Pigot, before we sit down to commerce, you'll tell us what's happened at the Lodge," she said, point-blank.

"Yes, Captain Pigot," said all the ladies in chorus, Mrs. Cope, of Marl Villa, even included.

"Well," the Captain said, cutting the cards as they lay on the table, "Mr. Irvine, I believe, goes by to-night's train——"

"It's broken off, then?" said two or three voices.

"I suppose so," said Captain Pigot. "Shall I divide the counters, Mrs. Thring?"

"But what frightened Mrs. Villeroy?" asked the land-agent's lady. She had to repeat her question.

"Oh! she's often nervous, isn't she, doctor?" said the usually communicative Pigot.

The shrewd old lady fancied she saw a look half-uncomfortable, half-confidential, pass between the Doctor and the Captain.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW MRS. VILLEROY SAW A GHOST.

I PROPOSE to be more communicative than was the unexpectedly reticent Captain Pigot, about the matters which had happened at the Lodge subsequently to the defeat of the Tootling Flute-players. Sir Bayard Beevor was not the only sleeper who was woke on the night following the first day's play in that match. The shrieks that proceeded from Mrs. Villeroy's bedroom were loud, and they roused every person in the house except one. All the servants were presently in the passage, before Mrs. Villeroy's door, in scanty habiliments, and exhibiting one and all a want of

presence of mind, till Clare appeared—which she did almost as soon as any of them—and in her dressing-gown, and with her long hair streaming down her back, entered Mrs. Villeroy's room instantly, telling the others not to follow unless she called out for them. They remained, huddling and frightened, outside in the lobby.

On entering, Clare, holding her candle high before her, glanced first round the room, but saw no one, and then at the bed upon which her aunt was sitting upright and alone (Mr. Villeroy being, of course, absent at Magglesford). Mrs. Villeroy's teeth were chattering audibly, and she presented every appearance of genuine terror, and addressed Clare with a warmth of greeting which showed that she was immensely relieved to be no longer alone.

"Oh! Clare, I am so glad you are come. Do not go away again. Get into the bed;

do, please! Oh! Clare, I have seen him again, William Villeroy."

"Not quite so loud, aunt," Clare said. "The servants are all outside. Don't you think you may have been dreaming?"

And she took up a chair, and placing it close at the bedside, was sitting down, as near as possible to Mrs. Villeroy; but, instantly struck by a sudden thought, rose again. But Mrs. Villeroy, to detain her, threw her arms round her niece's neck, and cried out—

"Don't go away, Clare, don't go away?"

"One moment," said Clare, extricating herself; and she went quickly to a far corner of the room, and opened the curtains of a shower-bath, but made no discovery.

She then opened the adjoining door of a dressing-room; but with the same result, Mrs. Villeroy calling out all the time,

"Come back to me, Clare, come back!"

At length Clare came back and sat down, and now the door of the bed-room was opened, and Luciana Mary entered agitated, in deshabille.

"What *is* the matter? Is mamma in a fit, Clare?" she called out as she entered.

"No, Lucy. Shut the door after you," Clare returned. "Stay, just tell Baker and Marmaduke, if they are there, to go outside the house, and look if they can see any one. And make the women servants go back to bed again. Tell them there is nothing the matter, but aunt's thinking some one is about who ought not to be."

Luciana Mary did as best she could what her cousin told her, and Clare meanwhile said to her aunt, who was crying on her shoulder,

"Now, aunt dear, what is it all?"

Thereupon Mrs. Villeroy gave a long rambling account, which was to the effect

that she had distinctly seen William Villeroy walk quickly and noiselessly across the room to the door; that she was not dreaming, because she had happened to have been lying awake for some time before; that she saw him so plainly because the blind of the window was not down, and he crossed before it in the moonlight that fell athwart the room. And Mrs. Villeroy pointed a tremulous finger to where a great flake of moonlight continued to lie.

"There," she said, quivering and crying still with excitement, "just between the blue wardrobe and the pier-glass."

As at the time of the first apparition, Clare, though she knew her aunt so well, was convinced now that the latter was not making up a tale—at least that she believed her own statement. Meditating for a few moments, Miss Vaughton could form no conjecture but a hurried one, that Mrs. Villeroy

had really seen a common burglar (who had perhaps heard of Mr. Villeroy's absence), and that her natural temperament had played her false, aided by her being half awake and naturally alarmed, and had so transformed the burglar into William Villeroy.

"Aunt," she said at last, "how old did he look?"

Mrs. Villeroy's reply conveyed that he looked much older than when she last saw him, but there was no mistaking the face. This answer foiled Clare. Had her aunt replied that he looked as young as when she last saw him, of course then the issue would have been one of ghost *v.* burglar; and Clare would have decided unhesitatingly in favour of the burglar. But now she began to conclude instead that William Villeroy was not dead, as reported.

Going out to make inquiry whether anything had resulted from the out-door search,

(leaving Luciana Mary with her mother), Clare found that it was only just commencing; for Baker Villeroy not having been roused from his slumbers by the tumult, the search was somewhat deferred. They found, however, no trace without the house; but within, Marmaduke, while waiting for Baker, discovered one of the lobby windows, just outside Mrs. Villeroy's room, to be unhasped and a little open. This might possibly have been merely a servant's carelessness; there was not even the slightest other indication of any entrance or exit, or any trace whatever. But Clare now continued to believe that Mrs. Villeroy had really seen William, and that he, not being a ghost but a living person, had found it necessary to unhasp a window to take his departure.

But she had other matters just now upon which to meditate. On the next afternoon but one, that of Mrs. Thring's tea-party, she

chanced to be enjoying the society of the infant Frederick, who was careering on his rocking-horse in an upstair corridor of the Lodge. She had fallen into a reverie, one of those happy ones which even the disappointed have now and then, in which memory rather than hope is active, and life takes a mellow and permanent colour while one dreams of it. Out of a window close at hand, Clare saw the pleasant meadows that swell into the hills to the west of Collington. She saw the happy summer afternoon passing over them on its quiet unnoticed wings, and she had some moments of dreamy enjoyment. She had very rarely had them of late, for she was anxious though not miserable, inasmuch as although her good-natured uncle had not been explicit about the precise nature of the business that required him to visit Magglesford, Clare gathered as well from instinct as from some hints he dropped

that he was gone in her interests, to find out whether his poverty was really the motive which was holding Bell back; and, if so, delicately to smooth matters. She did not forget this hope in her reverie.

So her dreamy mood was a pleasurable one, till, turning round, she saw a sight of an alarming character. The infant Frederick had once been taken to a circus, and, mindful of the feats which he had seen performed there, was desirous of imitating them. Accordingly, perceiving that Clare was not looking at him, he had audaciously lifted himself up from his seat on the rocking-horse, and, standing circus-fashion on that quadruped, had urged it to renew its wild career. The consequence was that he fell off, or at least he was in act to fall off, when Clare turned, too late to save him. Saved, however, he was, by being caught in the arms of Sir Bayard Beevor.

"Oh! thank you," Clare exclaimed—"thank you, Sir Bayard. You shocking Freddy, have you hurt yourself?"

"He's all right, Miss Vaughton," Sir Bayard said, reseating the child on the rocking-horse.

"Gee up!" said the unconcerned Freddy. "I'm the Duke of Wellington. Gee up!" And reflecting, perhaps, that the Duke of Wellington was not in the habit of standing up on his saddle when he took horse exercise, Frederick appeared content simply to sit his steed. He was soon at full gallop again.

"Did you come to this remote part of the house to ride the rocking-horse, Sir Bayard?" Clare said, not in earnest, of course. She wondered whether he had expected to find Luciana Mary there, and knowing he had been apprised of the engagement, thought of him not over-well.

"I did," the Baronet returned, tranquilly. "Riding a rocking-horse is exactly the sort of exercise which my medical advisers recommend—gentle, you know, and for ten minutes or so moderately exciting. If Freddy will allow me, I'll take a turn."

Freddy was always pleased to find his pursuits interesting to his seniors. He readily acquiesced; and accordingly the Baronet took a turn, and if not for ten, at all events for several minutes enjoyed an exhilarating canter; after which the Duke of Wellington remounted the rocking-horse, and put himself at the head of his cavalry for another charge.

The Baronet, however, did not depart. He seemed quite content to remain and talk to Clare. And, indeed, Clare, though she did not know it, was the real cause of his accepting a further invitation to stay a week at the Lodge. The Baronet was neither a

poet nor, in spite of his languor, a fool. It was Frank Irvine's poetical twist which made him love-loyal to Luciana Mary. Poets, after all, worship the body rather than the soul; and, for Frank, Luciana Mary's brown eyes and peach-bloom, and her little figure, which was graceful enough to support, if not to add to these charms, covered the multitude of her intellectual and moral deficiencies. But Sir Bayard, on the other hand, soon grew weary of Luciana Mary. It did not appear, however, for, in the first place, men's weariness of pretty girls does not come into outward show, and, in the second, her engagement to Frank was, of course, supposed to keep Sir Bayard in the background. The less the Baronet liked Luciana Mary, the more he liked Clare; and she began to like him, just as she liked the infant Frederick. Lazy and

conceited as Sir Bayard was, he somehow—an excellent sign—improved on acquaintance. There was an odd sort of humour that mingled with the simplicity of his *laisser aller*. He seemed a young man who was susceptible of improvement. There was certainly room for it.

He stayed so long in the corridor this afternoon that Clare became exceedingly anxious to get rid of him. She felt that he had not been invited to make a stay at the Lodge on her account, and much as she disapproved of Mrs. Villeroy's way of carrying on business, she almost began to regard herself uneasily as a fraudulent interloper. However, Sir Bayard lounged away at last. Clare, the infant Frederick becoming weary of equestrian exercise, was preparing to go also, when she heard a step approaching the corridor by a distant passage, and recog-

nized it as her uncle's. He had returned from Magglesford. Her face flushed and her heart beat so that the child Frederick might almost have heard it. She struggled for composure, and waited for her uncle, bending over Freddy, and smoothing, to hide her emotion, his very rough hair.

The corridor was lengthy, and Mr. Villeroy came along it very slowly, not like a bearer of good news. This Clare noted, and the chill of disappointment thrilled through her; but she hoped against hope, and busied herself more than ever with Freddy's hair. She did not lift up her face till her uncle was close upon her. He kissed her gravely, but made no remark, and then she knew that there was nothing in store for her but disappointment.

"Are you tired of that delightful place Magglesford already?" she said, with a brave attempt at gaiety.

"As weary a place as it is dirty," Mr. Villeroy returned. "A dull Pandemonium." And he went on making remarks uncomplimentary to the great northern manufacturing city, on which he seemed to spend some amount of wrath which he had on hand, and then made inquiries as to what had taken place at Collington during his absence. But not a word of Bell Carteret. The presence of the infant Frederick perhaps prevented him; but Clare knew that if he had good news he would have hinted it at once, and that his manner was altogether the manner of a man who had unpleasant things to communicate, if commuication was required. She was secretly anxious to hear what was to be heard, but she felt more wretched than ever when, on her suggesting to Freddy that his tea must be ready in the nursery, Mr. Villeroy did not take the hint, but expressed a wish to see Mr. Frederick Villeroy

in his favourite character of the Duke of Wellington.

"It is so bad," Clare thought, "that he even wants to put off telling it." And a spasm of misery went through her. "I wish he would tell me at once," she thought; and the idea that Bell Carteret was dead flashed across her, and she could hardly help breaking through her sense of propriety and questioning her uncle. She was much relieved when the Duke of Wellington's nurse came for him, to take him to his tea, and she was left alone with her uncle.

"I suppose I had better tell her," Mr. Villeroy thought, screwing himself up to the pitch. "I wonder if she at all guesses —she's very quick—that she is going to be disappointed."

"Baker has had an excellent appetite since you left, uncle," Clare said.

"He had before I went away," Mr. Villeroy returned, clearing his throat. "I have something to tell you, Clare, about that Mr. Carteret."

"Indeed!" Clare said. She made this remark in a quiet tone, by means of a stupendous effort at self-control. But there was no Freddy to bend down over now, and her difficulties were increased.

"Something that I fear will distress you."

"Is he dead?" Clare asked breathlessly, and her manner now displayed the interest she felt in Bell.

"No, my dear—worse," said Mr. Villeroy, with a humour that in spite of himself was not altogether unconscious—"he is married, Clare."

Mr. Villeroy's experiences of the female sex prepared him for a terrible outbreak here—Clare fainting, Clare in hysterics,

Clare attacking him with a torrent of invective. But Clare did none of these things. Her face became very white, but she drew herself up to her full stature, and said,

"Indeed! Please tell me all you know about it."

Thereupon Mr. Villeroy gave her a hasty account of all that he had seen in the little out-of-the-way church at Magglesford, concluding with the comment that, so far as he could see, it did not appear to him a very respectable transaction.

"I can hardly in fairness think that it affects Frank Irvine, nor can I very well mention it to him," Mr. Villeroy said. "But he is very intimate with Mr. Carteret, and I must say that on Lucy's account only I should be more comfortable if I had not seen anything of this strange transaction. I wonder if Frank knows anything about it."

"I do not think that anything is proved against Mr. Carteret," Clare said, quietly. Mr. Villeroy shook his head. "But you have been very kind, dear uncle," Clare said; "and I thank you. And now we will forget—I will try to forget this unfortunate business."

Her face, as she spoke, caught the light of the low evening sun shining through the window; and Mr. Villeroy saw that, pale as she was, her eyes had not a tear in them, but were lifted slightly up, and were open and clear. There is heroism in some natures still, though in the circumstances of modern life it lies dormant; and there was something of the heroic in the nature of Clare Vaughton.

"I think," Mr. Villeroy said, not quite knowing what to say next, and feeling himself unequal to a resumption of ordinary

conversation, "I think I will go and touch up the 'Magnum Bonum.'" And he left Clare alone in the corridor.

The first moments of disappointment or sorrow are not the heaviest. The brunt has to be borne, not in the first stunning minutes, but in the subsequent ones. This fact had helped the dignity of Clare. She was not a stoic after all, but a young girl. And when Mr. Villeroy had gone, she dropped into an old carved chair—the only one that stood in the corridor—and wept long and passionately. An hour, two hours went by, the long light of sunset passed from the floor, and the place darkened; but still Clare sat there, now rocking to and fro with a pale, desperate countenance, now leaning forward, burying her face in her hands, and weeping bitterly. She was young, but her youth was gone.

It departs from most of us only too quickly, but from her it seemed to have passed with the speed and the blasted result of a flash of lightning.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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